



Volume 1 - Translated by @ashmxt.t

Prologue: Prayer/Command - Translated by @ashmxt.t

In that fateful instant when I discovered my pregnancy, I was immediately struck with the realization that this was utterly unacceptable. The existence burgeoning within my womb held no spark of admiration.

The **Avesta** whispered to me, branding it as a repugnant abomination, an entity that stood apart from both myself and my husband.

An overwhelming wave of revulsion washed over me, threatening to bring forth my very bile. Even if swarms of wriggling larvae had taken residence within, it could scarcely compare to the repugnance I felt now. Worse still, it continued to thrive, feasting upon my flesh and sanguine life force. Each passing moment, as I allowed this harrowing state of affairs to persist, became an indelible mark of unspeakable shame upon my soul.

With unwavering resolve, I resolved to terminate this fetus, to sever its tenuous connection to life. Yet, as I poised myself to act, a flicker of doubt stayed in my hand... It was not the pangs of maternal guilt that hindered me, but rather a single lingering uncertainty.

Would it meekly acquiesce to its own demise?

Perhaps it was perilous to judge this being of the other side solely through the prism of our mortal sensibilities, deeming it utterly helpless. Fear gnawed at my core, anxious that it might sense my intention to extinguish it, leaving me uncertain of how it might retaliate.

Thus, I must maintain an icy composure. Emotions must not hold sway. I must embody the sagacity of a seasoned warrior, guided by an unyielding strength of will. I must discern the optimal strategy to corner this adversary and emerge triumphant.

With my decision thus resolved, I immersed myself in contemplation, weighing each potential course of action... And at long last, a singular truth crystallized before me, resplendent in its unwavering clarity.

Standing upon the terrace of the castle, I gaze into the vast expanse below. Like a voracious abyss, the precipice unveils itself, a maw of stygian darkness.

Into its unfathomable depths, I shall plunge, relinquishing my own existence, while simultaneously obliterating the abomination that festers within. Through the sacrificial offering of my own life, I shall assuredly avert an impending cataclysm.

Undeniably, a pang of resentment and sorrow grips my heart, for the path I now tread diverges from the promise I had made to my husband, failing to safeguard the hearth in his absence. Nevertheless, I am his wife. I yearn to embody valor in pursuit of a brighter future, just as he imperils himself upon the battlefield. And when the time comes, when we are

reunited in a realm far more resplendent, may he shower me with praise for my unwavering efforts, and my fidelity to his expectations. May he enfold me in his embrace.

"I love you," I whisper tenderly, as I surrender myself to the abyss.

A cacophony of wind unleashes its primal roar, enveloping me in a cloak of impenetrable darkness that engulfs my field of vision. Fear grips me, its icy tendrils wrapping around my very being. But in mere moments, it shall all come to pass. I will not grant it the satisfaction of its inaugural wail. And in that fleeting instant, as I find solace in the certainty of my own demise, and in my ultimate victory...

"Thank you, Mother. This shall mark my first kill," I hear it taunt from within, intoxicated by a purpose distinct from my own, yet undoubtedly grand in its malevolence...

"I love you," I whisper, as my skull connects with the unforgiving ground, the pain of impact paling in comparison to the overwhelming despair that engulfs me.



And in that instant, my eyes flutter open.

If I had just experienced the culmination of my existence, only to regain consciousness the next moment, does this mean I have ventured into the realm of the afterlife? The reality of my situation eludes me for but a fleeting moment, swiftly dispelled as I shake my head in disbelief. For I have just been reborn, and the being that occupied my previous form is not truly me.

As I survey my surroundings once more, I discern a landscape eerily reminiscent of a hellish abyss. Yet, I remain unmistakably myself. Firstly, the length of my hair is in stark contrast to that of the recent mother within my consciousness, and everything around me consists of tangible, physical objects.

Swords and spears lie here, accompanied by an assortment of tools, contraptions, and enigmatic ornaments... A myriad of items resemble living beings in shape or substance, yet none of them stir or emit a sound. They do not exude the aura of someone's remains; if I were to encapsulate this sensation, they resemble discarded refuse.

In the midst of these towering mountains of garbage, stretching beyond the horizon, I find myself seated in solitude. And still, the piles continue to grow. Like colossal whirlwinds or towering edifices, several undulating tendrils extend from heaven to earth. If one were to compare them to anything, they would resemble waterfalls. High above, amidst the depths of space, there exists something that births these overwhelming objects upon our world. Moreover, I can perceive it with unaided eyes.

Enormous... no, that is an understatement.

It is an indescribably, almost comically immense star, one that defies the limits of human perception. Its sight alone strains the capabilities of the eye. If this is its dump, it is not difficult to surmise what I must be.

Perhaps I am the star's excretion, its castoffs, or even its offspring. It matters not. What is essential is that I am undoubtedly not devoid of life.

As this realization settles within me, I am struck by another profound truth. It is akin to a rule governing this realm, a principle that shapes the very fabric of the universe. I perceive my position in relation to that of the star.

[So, you are already acquainted with the **Avesta**?] a voice calls out, relieving me of the burden of inquiry.

[Thankfully, you need not expend your energy.]

"Thank you for the compliment," I reply, my voice infused with a mix of curiosity and respect.

"Pray tell, what should I address you as?"



The spectacle of an eye unfurling upon the surface of an immense star, its voice resounding with such power as to reverberate through the entire world, fails to elicit astonishment within me. I comprehend its nature. Aside from its colossal scale, it is merely a living entity. There, it merely parts its mouth and extends its tongue. Planets, suspended in close proximity, are ensnared and devoured in a methodical procession.

Perchance the planet on which I stand moves in correlation with it, which renders its motion seemingly stagnant. It seems we traverse the boundless expanse of space at an ineffable velocity, its vital rhythms akin to a shoal of migrating fish. It appears that its structure is such that the more it consumes, the more it burgeons. The stars encircling it appear no larger than insignificant insects in comparison. I surmise that for ordinary beings, this is naught but a cataclysm of cosmic proportions—a gluttonous hypergiant heralding the annihilation of any extraterrestrial life form.

"You belong to the 'other side,' do you not?" I inquire.

"If I were to designate the side to which I belong as the right, then you, sir, are a formidable representative of its complete antithesis—the left... Moreover, you hold a prominent standing among its ranks, do you not? There are said to be seven of you, yet I am inclined to believe that even among them, you enjoy a special reputation."

This world stands bifurcated, divided into factions of left and right. It matters not whether one dubs them light and dark, white and black, water and oil—the crux lies in the arrangement itself, compelling both sides to wage incessant warfare.

I comprehend this newfound truth, which I now recognize as the **Avesta**, with a sense of instinctive certitude. It manifests within me as an unassailable truth, engendering neither queries nor discontent. By all means, it is my duty to bring about the demise of this behemoth, and conversely, it is his to annihilate me. This resolute dualism, I surmise, is intelligible to others.

"So, we stand as adversaries, yet we shall not act in haste, correct?" I postulate.

"You professed a preference for conserving your energy; were it your inclination, you would have disposed of me long ago. Observe for yourself the situation in which I find myself."

I raise my clenched fist in a feeble gesture toward the gargantuan entity, realizing full well its futility. And given his lack of intent, coupled with my constrained ability, it appears that discourse remains our sole option.

"I hold the conviction that names wield an irreplaceable significance within any conversation," I assert.

[I have no interest in such matters,] he retorts.

[Address me however you please, even if you were to deem me your creator...]

"In that case," I declare, "I shall designate you as my father."

I incline my head in acknowledgment, welcoming his words with a sense of profound reason. It is undeniably part of his intricate design that I possess the faculties of speech and rationality, despite my recent emergence into existence. The **Avesta**, perhaps, offered me glimpses of the world's structure, but it did not unveil all its intricacies. It becomes apparent that my assumption, attributing my ease of understanding to my father's influence, was not unfounded.

"I have witnessed a parent engaged in conflict with their offspring before, so it is not an unprecedented occurrence," I remark.

"However, I fail to comprehend the necessity of such a display..."

Furthermore, I struggle to fathom why my father chose to bring me into existence. Why bestow life upon a child who, sooner or later, harbors desires of your own demise? If I were an unsuccessful experiment, he could have promptly eradicated me instead of engaging in conversation.

[That is your purpose,] he asserts.

[I am uncertain as to what precisely you observed, but you possess the ability to delve into the thoughts and memories of others, experiencing their perspectives. Though it may prove cumbersome at times, once you become accustomed to it, you can wield control over it with your **Commandment**.]

"Sharing?"

I involuntarily echo, swiftly grasping the meaning behind his words. Indeed, I partook in a mother's point of view. However, lacking familiarity, my waves surged forth indiscriminately, dissolving the boundary between us.

The concept of a **Commandment** eludes me for now, and I shall table that issue for a later time. It is highly likely that it pertains to the **Avesta**, and eventually, all shall become clear. Presently, I possess an inquiry unrelated to such matters.

"You imply that this ability holds tremendous importance to you?" I inquire.

[Indeed. That is precisely why I brought you into being,] he responds.

His words carry an undertone that suggests I am devoid of merit beyond this singular function. Curiously, I harbor no resentment towards this notion, as I do not harbor any illusions regarding my own capabilities.

[A few days ago, I terminated individuals aligned with your faction. To be precise, I released some of them from their existence. However, I did not act on a capricious whim.]

"Because empty tasks hold no appeal for you. Naturally, there existed a purpose and rationale behind your actions."

[Indeed. The crux of the matter is that I failed to comprehend them. That is why I yearn to attain understanding.]

My father utters these words in a tone that suggests it is a commendable sentiment, but in truth, his mistake is glaringly obvious.

We and they are fundamentally different.

Mutual comprehension of these entities remains an insurmountable barrier, for it is an inherent aspect of our very creation.

[They relayed the following to me. Our collective prayers shall engender hope. Its radiance shall yield a miracle that will inevitably vanquish you... Yet, I struggle to grasp its essence entirely. What exactly constitutes a miracle? What does hope truly entail? How does one measure 'all of us'?]

My father continues to grumble, his disquiet reverberating through the cosmos, igniting a flame from which both heaven and earth are consumed. The spectacle unfolds akin to a workshop where annihilation takes shape.

[Specify a number. If the intent is to manifest a miracle, how many of 'all of you' are required? How many prayers must be uttered? How many wishes expressed? And how many tears shed? What purpose is there in speaking in abstract terms? Show me the composition of courage. Offer a numerical equivalent of determination.]

I pause momentarily, allowing the weight of his words to settle in the air.

[I conveyed this very sentiment to them, but alas, they failed to comprehend my perspective.]

Curiosity tinged with skepticism emanates from my father's gaze as he contemplates his query.

"And how did you arrive at an answer, then?"

[There was no alternative but to embark on the arduous task of counting them myself. I meticulously calculated the expanse of space under their dominion, quantified the multitude of planets held within their grasp, and estimated the presence of sentient beings capable of even the most minimal mental activity... The tally amounted to approximately one galaxy. What are your thoughts on such a figure?]

He deliberates for a moment, his contemplation manifesting in a measured response.

"I cannot definitively say. Perchance, it is a considerable number. At the very least, it is no triviality," I concede, a flicker of acknowledgment present in my voice.

"If such an amalgamation of desires were to converge, their collective power would be formidable, or so it appears to me."

[However, throughout my existence, I have laid waste to five hundred galaxies. Do not mistake my words for falsehood. I hold an aversion to deceit. I comprehend that my existence revolves around numbers, thus I place great value upon precision.]

I harbor no doubt regarding his proclamation, for my father speaks with unwavering sincerity. It may be uncommon to witness a personification of violence engaging in a discourse about their actions, yet it serves as a testament to the vast disparity in our existence as sentient beings. While humans may perceive a galaxy as an immense entity, my father regards it as nothing more than a resource or sustenance, viewed through a practical lens.

[The magnitude of what I have consumed far surpasses their notion of 'all,'] he continues, his conviction unwavering.

[This incontrovertible fact dictates that they hold no grounds to demand from a position of strength, would you not agree? I harbor no intention of diminishing the significance of their prayers and the like, but I hope they refrain from minimizing my own existence.]

"You speak truthfully," I interject, acknowledging the equilibrium in the conditions set forth by both sides.

"You have grown by consuming the entirety of 'all' sadness. Even if hope and despair differ in their vectors, they are inherently equivalent."

[Indeed,] he concurs, his voice tinged with a note of triumph.

[Hence, my victory was an inescapable outcome, mathematically proven. The facts were not in their favor, and yet, inexplicably, they refused to acknowledge it. They vilified me, branding me a deranged individual, as if I had uttered the unfathomable.]

In his grievance, my father poses the question of who truly embodies madness. While I possess no obligation nor inclination to console him, the direction of our conversation is gradually becoming clearer. However, there remains a crucial point I must clarify before delving further.

"And what is your perspective on this matter? Do you view my comrades as pitiable fools, incapable of basic calculation?"

I inquire, seeking insight into his thoughts.

[No], he responds, his voice carrying a measured tone.

[They possess a logic of their own, one that eludes my comprehension. If I were to dismiss it as nonsensical, I would forego any opportunity for personal growth. Similarly, our side perceives their viewpoint as madness, for all that is unknown has the potential to pose a threat.]

And so, these words are spoken without any hidden agenda by a being that now likely encompasses the vastness of the entire universe. Alongside my astonishment at this realization, a profound sense of awe takes hold of me.

Undeniably, it is a terrifying prospect. Devoid of knowledge about the limits of his own abilities, my father can only forge ahead with an alarming innocence. In a typical conflict, no one would stand a chance of catching up to him, let alone halting his advance.

"And that is precisely what I require... isn't it?"

I utter, attempting to organize the information we have gathered.

My function, enabling me to delve into the thoughts of others, alongside the power borne from universal prayers. My father approached it through the lens of arithmetic, refuting it with his sheer numerical advantage, but my comrades refused to accept his conclusion.

Both sides fail to comprehend one another, each considering their own perspective to be the correct one, leading to an unending cycle of violence and death. And now, I find myself standing amidst them, aligned with their interests in this particular scenario. Answering my father's question becomes imperative, serving as proof of the truth sought by my comrades. Thus, I require...

[You must obtain a miracle,] he declares.

[Touch upon their prayers, delve into their essence and reveal their hidden meaning. Is it truly a matter of mere material advantage, or does a supernatural element lie beneath... You must uncover it. You have no right to remain ignorant. Acquire knowledge, for I shall consume you.]

A colossal entity pours its entire being into this command. In response, I nod in affirmation. Yes, it shall be done. Engaging with humanity, acquainting myself with individuals, and amassing their thoughts and emotions, I shall derive the equation of a miracle. I fail to comprehend why they deny the power of arithmetic even when faced with annihilation from an adversary boasting unimaginable material superiority.

As of now, with limited interaction with my comrades, much remains unknown to me. Therefore, I shall seek them out. And then, I shall learn from them. Discovering a hero capable of cleaving the very fabric of the universe, I shall return here, and then...

"I will end you without fail," I respond.

As soon as these words leave my lips, the world itself undergoes a disorienting upheaval.

[Let it be so.]

My father acknowledges, placing great faith in my eventual return.

[I hold high expectations for you, my daughter.]

The jarring shift that upends the heavens and earth lifts me aloft amidst a tumultuous surge of debris. In this weightless state, I struggle to discern whether I am falling or floating.

With no time to regain my composure, I am expelled into the depths of outer space, devoid of any attire. It is then that I finally grasp the understanding that I have no need for respiration, and my anatomical composition enables me to endure the harshest cold and radiation unscathed.

...Ah, so this is it. I am not truly a living entity.

Though my appearance may resemble that of a human, at my core, I am no different from the garbage that surrounded me.

I am a soulless and lifeless instrument, nothing more than a tool.

Undoubtedly, my father scatters his numerous offspring in this manner. In accordance with his aesthetic preferences, beliefs, and various enigmatic judgments, it matters not whether it holds meaning or not. He persists in creating and discarding, utterly indifferent to who may come across his creations. Regardless of the consequences that may ensue.

Yes, it is the epitome of irresponsibility, but such is the privilege of the mighty. After all, no one can impede him.

As much as I may have declared my intent to stop him, I now realize that I am but one of the few children who hold some significance in his eyes.

While he expressed his hopes for me, even without his expectations, my determination remains unyielding.

The world is arranged in such a way that my father and I are destined to clash, and in this battle, we must strive for victory.

Around my increasingly distant, yet still dauntingly colossal father, a multitude of massive planets orbit. Like migratory fish rushing past me from all sides, they form an elegant procession. There appear to be approximately fifty of them, each possessing the same characteristics as the central star—unthinkable monstrosities, ceaselessly multiplying and growing in size. This congregation of predatory planets, I have dubbed it the **Annihilation Star Cluster**.

Time is of the essence before they devour the entire universe before the power of the left side eradicates the right. The weight of responsibility upon me is immense. I must address my aimless drift. I shudder to contemplate the consequences of wandering through space for thousands of years; the notion is far from amusing.

Perhaps the **Commandment** holds the answer... My father insisted that I understand its essence, even if it merely aids me in fulfilling my function more effectively. If that is the case, then let me embark on unraveling this mystery.

I will seek out intelligent life forms, establishing resonance with their consciousness to ascertain their precise location. Subsequently, it appears that I shall endeavor to navigate toward them.

My physical form is resilient, so even if exhaustion takes its toll, I am unlikely to succumb. There is no time for respite, thus I swiftly set about my task. Closing my eyes, I contemplate for a fleeting moment before opening them once more, initiating the first step.

"My name is... Quinn."

First and foremost, I must assign myself a name. Though speaking within the vacuum of space may be futile, it feels dignified to give voice to it. My purpose revolves around communication, necessitating adherence to its fundamental principles. Ultimately, I possess the agency to designate my own ego, and by understanding myself, I shall undoubtedly uncover the depths of the **Avesta** that elude me. I comprehend the nature of this **Commandment**.

"I have adopted this name from an unfortunate mother. And even though I am not her, I believe it is my duty to inherit her posthumous will. After all, I stand as her ally."

The battle between parent and child... one that 'Quinn' may have lost, but one that I shall emerge victorious from. This name shall be etched into the annals of the right side's triumph.

Can you hear me, my comrades-in-arms...

Where are you, children of hope...

I yearn to touch upon your desires, to witness the radiance of your light...

Praying, searching, drifting through the expanse of space, repeating words that I shall undoubtedly echo many more times...

I declare my existence, shaping a prayer for a hero and conveying it to "all."

My name is Quinn. I am the companion to your miracle. May our collaboration be endearing and fruitful.

Chapter 1: The Wicked Warrior - Translated by @ashmxt.t

1

Twenty years have elapsed since that day, though the concept of time itself remains elusive in its precise measurement.

Depending on one's perspective, a span of two months could appear as a mere blink of an eye or an expanse of two hundred years. Therefore, for the sake of clarity and consistency, I shall adhere to the timeline established by the organization to which I belong.

Twenty years have come and gone, yet if comprehending this interval proves challenging, consider it similar to the maturation of a child into adulthood. However, even this perception may differ among races and cultures, for I myself have remained unchanged since my birth. Regardless, in order to avoid further confusion and facilitate understanding, I shall continue to employ the customary conventions of time, distance, weight, language, and the like. I apologize if this appears self-centered, yet it aligns with the shared understanding among those who now hear my voice. In the future, when we have the opportunity to meet and stand united, such familiar conventions will help us avoid unnecessary inconveniences. With that clarified, let us delve into the events that transpired during these two decades.

Only seven years after parting ways with my father, I reached a planet inhabited by sentient beings. Although the journey through space was long, from an objective standpoint, it seemed relatively brief. However, the subsequent phase proved more challenging.

Finding individuals with both the ability and willingness to assist, even among those who ostensibly belong to the same side, proved to be no easy task. I came to realize that not everyone possesses a comprehensive understanding of the **Avesta**. Only the strongest and most knowledgeable among us, commonly referred to as heroes, have delved into the profound mysteries contained within its pages.

Ordinary inhabitants and animals, on the other hand, possess a rudimentary understanding limited to identifying which side they align with – the right or the left. They know little beyond the fact that these two sides are irreconcilable enemies. In essence, their comprehension mirrors my own at birth, vague and lacking in depth.

During my seven years of existence, I managed to acquire some knowledge. Yet, to progress further, I needed to encounter individuals on par with, if not surpassing, my own level of understanding. These individuals, whom we call **yazatas**, represent the warriors of righteousness, the true champions of good aligned with the right, the **ashavans**.

Alas, they are few and far between. Considering that not much time has elapsed since my father decimated a multitude of warriors, I embarked on a long quest in search of them.

On several occasions, I encountered warriors from the opposing side – formidable **drujvants**, or **daevas** of the Left – and each encounter inevitably culminated in a deadly clash.

While depleting the ranks of our adversaries served some purpose, my ultimate goal could not be achieved without identifying our allies. Ironically, in my pursuit of miracles, I was left

miraculously with just one warrior by my side. The vastness of the cosmos became all too apparent as I realized how daunting this search had become. Even the initial planet I visited loomed immeasurable in size, rendering thorough exploration an impossible feat.

Consequently, I embarked on a meticulous process of inquiry, employing my unique "function" to narrow the scope of my search.

Finally, four years ago, I found a comrade, a friend who met the criteria. Thus, my search spanned nine years, encompassing a multitude of indescribable emotions. Yet, this was merely the beginning.

To earn their trust, I devoted an additional year to assisting them in any way possible. Eventually, I received a summons to the headquarters of the heroes and was acknowledged as a **yazata**. However, it was far from a straightforward journey. Hence, my heroic endeavors extend for a mere three years.

Though I am relatively young and lacking in experience, it does not set me apart from the rest. I was informed that over a million warriors existed two decades ago, whereas now we number barely a thousand.

My father claimed to have "let some go," but I was stunned to learn that only a few dozen survived the carnage. We endured a devastating defeat and teetered on the precipice of extinction. Yet, through some unfathomable resilience, we have managed to regain our footing and are now charting a path toward revival. Our current position is one of precarious hope, and it is vital for you to comprehend the gravity of this situation, which I shall now explain.

1. Everything in this world is divided between two incompatible aspects - what we call good and evil.
2. The belonging of everyone and everyone to their side is obvious. It's impossible to make a mistake.
3. Both sides have groups that are the core of their combat power. The main condition for victory is their immediate destruction.
4. If the destruction is delayed, the vacated places are filled. In other words, heirs are born.
5. One should elevate oneself to new heights and put all one's being on the line with the help of the **Commandment**.

In essence, the **Avesta** encapsulates these five crucial tenets. While many are aware of only the first two, we, the warriors of righteousness, must delve deeper and grasp the knowledge of how to bring the battle to its ultimate conclusion.

Despite the universe being divided between the **ashavans** and the **drujvants**, the third tenet reveals that it is not imperative to annihilate every last enemy. There exists a more efficient method - the elimination of the core.

Achieving this feat guarantees victory, as it inevitably leads to the collapse of the remaining foes.

We, the embodiment of goodness, stand as the core within our Sacred Realm, governed by our righteous king and the unwavering will of its inhabitants. It is here, within this temple of daring champions, that the mighty **yazatas** gather, and we invoke the name of Wahman Yast.

The core of evil is Father and his brethren - the seven calamities who lead the **daevas**, sowing destruction and vice. They represent absolute evil, the Seven Great Kings of Evil.

Twenty years ago, Wahman Yast teetered on the brink of annihilation, and the loss of thirty more warriors would have spelled irreversible doom. The fact that we managed to avert this catastrophe and now plan, albeit imperfectly, to launch a counterattack is truly remarkable. As stipulated in the fourth tenet, we replenished our ranks to reach a number nearing a thousand, far from an inconsequential force. However, it is equally true that the other side can prevent the birth of heirs through a single, decisive elimination of our elite.

I have heard tales of the strife among the King of Evils themselves, with subordinates vying for leadership. Yet, the fact that the core of evil remains intact even in such circumstances underscores the vast difference in our military might. In the two millennia of our Sacred Realm's existence, only three instances are known where a **yazata** managed to vanquish an King of Evil.

Painful as it is to admit, our enemy is formidable indeed. The magnitude of this truth becomes evident when one recalls the **Annihilation Star Cluster** and the awe-inspiring power it embodies. The father alone commands such unimaginable might, and there exist six more beings akin to him, all of whom must be overcome within a limited span of time.

This, without a doubt, requires a miracle. This is precisely why the fifth tenet and the **Commandments** hold such significance.

I must refine my purpose and wholeheartedly strive for victory. Though both sides harbor a genuine desire to annihilate their adversaries, I believe that this commitment holds the key to the miracle. After all, twenty years ago, my father chose to spare the Sacred Realm.

If he so-willed it, he could have eradicated every single warrior of good, but he did not.

Why?

Perhaps there are instances where the third and fifth tenets of the **Avesta** contradict one another. I do not know the **Commandment** my father took, but by pouring his entire essence

into his own path, he refrained from extinguishing the sacred kingdom and brought forth my existence.

In my estimation, this represents a significant flaw. It is conceivable that the power of the King of Evils stems from such contradictions. In essence, their vulnerabilities can be exploited to our advantage.

"Quinn... Quinn!"

The urgent call echoed through the air, beckoning my attention. In this tumultuous battle, neither I nor my allies entertain the notion of surrender. Such a course of action is simply inconceivable, for the **Avesta**, our sacred bindings, leaves no room for such a possibility.

"Cease the broadcast," a voice commanded, cutting through the chaos.

"Tell us about 'him,' and we shall ascertain the situation here."

I turned towards my colleague, acknowledging their request with a solemn nod. Steadying my gaze ahead, I focused on the task at hand. As a **yazata** of the revered Sacred Realm, it falls upon me to confront the **daeva** that afflicts this land, to gather miracles and forge them into a sword of victory.

"In the name of the sacred wings of Vohu Mana," I declared, my voice resolute and unwavering, "vanish from this realm, you malevolent fiends of evil!"

Making grand proclamations had become second nature to me. For I am not alone in this fight; I stand alongside comrades, and with each passing day, our ranks continue to grow.

Rest assured, I eagerly await the day when we can march together, shoulder to shoulder, in unison.

2

The scene unfolded like a tempestuous inferno, resembling the wrath of a volcanic eruption. From the very outset of the battle, a relentless onslaught of sand and shards of stone erupted from the ground, transforming the air into a swirling maelstrom that obscured the sun. The once-clear distinction between day and night became an enigma, as the thick storm of debris and smoke enveloped everything in an eerie, otherworldly haze.

Though the time dictated that it should be noon, the atmosphere remained cloaked in a shroud of impenetrable darkness. The sporadic bursts of flames and billows of smoke further distorted reality, turning the surroundings into a disorienting phantasmagoria.

The intermittent disappearance and reappearance of light sources made it impossible to acclimate one's vision, leaving a person disoriented and struggling to discern their exact

position in the vast expanse of space. Amid this chaos, the remnants of shattered edifices, foliage, wildlife, and even the mingling of lifeless bodies hurtled toward us like projectiles.

Evading this supersonic barrage of shrapnel proved a formidable task, demanding every ounce of strength to stave off further deterioration of our perilous situation. Time itself seemed to conspire against us, as three cities had already been reduced to mere dust, claiming the lives of countless **ashavans** trapped within their desolated ruins.

Even among our small group of five comrades, two had succumbed to the relentless onslaught, yet we remained powerless to mount a counteroffensive. This **daeva**, this formidable adversary, possessed an astonishing strength that defied belief. It was unfathomable that such a monstrous entity had eluded our previous encounters. From whence had it emerged, with its nefarious intent and insurmountable might?

"Quinn, watch out!"

The urgent cry pierced through the chaos, alerting me to an imminent threat. Emerging from the billowing veil of smoke, a colossal tentacle materialized, capable of obliterating an entire fortress with a single blow. Its appearance was reminiscent of a menacing tongue, adorned with countless spiky protrusions. Each spike rivaled the length and girth of a towering tree, rendering evasion of this gargantuan appendage highly impossible..

I instinctively retaliated, delivering a swift kick that, while failing to repel it entirely, miraculously spared me from a catastrophic collision.

My chosen combat style revolved around unarmed hand-to-hand combat, a discipline often questioned by others. Perhaps they were right, for I possessed no inherent aptitude for wielding conventional weapons.

Countless attempts had proven that my skills with a sword were woefully lacking, reducing me to the gracelessness of an inebriated dancer. The realization that tools were not meant for me had initially come as a shock, but ultimately, acceptance was the only viable path.

Upon parting ways with my father, I had come to terms with my existence as a mere instrument, destined to be utilized by others.

This was the **Commandment**—the self-imposed restriction that bound me and defined my purpose. While abiding by the **Commandment**, I could access a power akin to the reverse side of the taboo.

As an instrument, my actions were rendered inert without the directive of another. I existed solely to fulfill the prayers and commands of others. Thus, I stood incessantly awaited instructions, for the moment I received them, my abilities would be augmented.

I was a pawn, an entity whose skills and capabilities were intrinsically linked to competent leadership.

"Right, shoot! Don't forget to cover Kira!"

The familiar voice rang out, punctuating the chaos with a command that guided my every movement.

When ordered to "kill" or "defeat," I could execute with ruthless precision on autopilot. However, if a more nuanced directive tailored to the situation at hand was provided, my accuracy and effectiveness correspondingly increased. Yet, given my reliance on the strategic abilities of my comrades, it would be remiss to claim consistent excellence. After all, my **Commandment** had not been undertaken with the expectation of engaging in battle.

My primary duty lay in the pursuit of miracles—the honing of my father's bestowed function to "read the thoughts of others."

On the battlefield, I became a weapon, a formidable force to be reckoned with. In times of peace, I transformed into a radar, a transmitter, and a repository of knowledge. It was within this latter role that my true value resided.

Alas, in the midst of the relentless tumult, such considerations were relegated to the periphery of my consciousness.

My trump card, though potent in battle, proved ineffective against a mindless beast-like adversary. My fortunes had not granted me the fortune of facing such a foe.

Nevertheless, I am bound by the unbreakable **Commandment** I have undertaken. To violate it would invite heavenly retribution—an instant death, as the **Avesta** suggests.

"What about 'feathers'? Do you still have enough of them?" questioned a companion.

"N-no, I've already spent them all... Aw!"

I lamented, realizing their depletion. However, I remembered that making an "offer" and leaving the final decision to others did not constitute a breach of the **Commandment**. Seeking aid from a friend, I turned to them, yet my voice proved a fatal distraction, causing their demise. Only three of us remained, including myself.

"Teleport, Quinn! This bastard is up to something!" came the urgent command.

"...Ah?!"

I exclaimed, catching sight of an ominous light ahead, faintly discernible through the smokescreen. It pulsed, seemingly counting down to an impending devastating assault upon everything in its vicinity.

"Shebatir!" I cried out almost simultaneously, as the destructive light finally erupted.

The ensuing explosion unleashed searing heat and radiation capable of vaporizing even stone. Avoidance proved impossible, let alone retaliation.

"Kh-ha-ah..." I gasped, my entire body scathed by the intense heat.

Yet, miraculously, all my limbs remained intact. I realized I had traversed the world, now positioned approximately ten kilometers away from the previous location. I had evaded the wave of destruction by employing a 'feather'—an instantaneous supernatural movement, a power bestowed upon me by Vohu Mana, the Star Spirit patron of the Sacred Realm.

These Star Spirits were extraordinary beings born from the souls of stars. Incarnations of celestial bodies, they possessed unimaginable power.

Vohu Mana, specifically, took the form of a continent-sized snow-white eagle, although now lacking a corporeal presence due to grave injuries suffered two decades prior. Yet, some of his power remained accessible to us in the form of gifts.

As warriors of the Sacred Realm, we earned 'feathers' of Vohu Mana as rewards for our deeds or other merits. These feathers bore a mark upon our bodies, granting us the ability to harness the Star Spirit's power.

Each feather corresponded to a specific gift: Saam for attack boost, Kshatra for defense boost, Haoma for regeneration boost, Fravard for flight, and Shebatir for instant teleportation.

I had employed teleportation, a gift typically reserved for traversing between our home planet and other stars, to dodge the imminent attack. Had it not been for my colleague's precise command, my demise would have been certain.

"Thank you. Please accept my... gratitude..." I faltered, turning towards my nearby comrade.

But instead, a charred mass resembling a human form hung in its place. It disintegrated into nothingness, leaving me speechless. The grinding of my teeth filled the air as I gently gathered their remnants, carried by the wind, and placed them within the fold of my garments.

It pained me that not even a trace of their body remained, and I could no longer touch them. Yet, this was yet another sacrifice inherent to the path I had chosen. Resoluteness and triumph were the aims of the **yazata**.

Everything unfolded in accordance with the instructions of the **Avesta**...

Moments later, composed and unfazed, I turn my gaze towards the epicenter of the explosion. The smoke screen dissipates, revealing the enemy in all its grotesque detail. It resembles a multi-legged heart, gleaming with impurities and adorned with scattered eyes and mouths. Though dwarfed in comparison to my formidable father, this **daeva** still poses a mountainous threat.



"So... What to do?" I ponder aloud.

Another explosion is unlikely, given that the enemy unleashed that devastating attack only once during our eight-hour battle, it requires time to recharge, providing a temporary respite. However, my own resources are dwindling. I have just two 'feathers' remaining, and my gifts of protection and flight are nearing their limits. Without intervention, they could last approximately a day, but if I continue evading attacks and engaging in aerial maneuvers, their endurance will diminish.

In grueling battles, 'feathers' are quickly exhausted, leading to the deaths of comrades. It is evident that my own supply will soon run dry. Thus, I must bring this to a swift conclusion.

Perhaps the enemy is also fatigued.

Their powerful attack betrays annoyance and weariness. Now is the moment to seize the offensive. However...

"Quinn, help. I'm trapped, unable to escape," a voice echoes, shaking me to the core.

I had assumed everyone else perished, nearly resigning myself to the inability to make a decisive move. I had not expected her to still be alive. Though we are not acquainted well, she had endured everything, even without any feathers to aid her.

"Samluch, you're alive? Where are you?" I inquire.

To my surprise, she responds with a request for assistance, prompting me to take action. The scorched desert surrounds me, but even from above, her location remains elusive.

"I told you, I'm trapped. That hulk trampled me into the ground, but I emerged unscathed from that explosion," she explains.

"Well... it seems you're a mole now?" I jest.

"Don't be silly. It wasn't by choice. You may have a stoic demeanor, but you have your moments too... Shall we play the roles of contrast?" she retorts.

"If you're underground, you shouldn't be able to see my face," I remark.

"That's the point. Anyway, I'm here, hurry!"

Throughout our conversation, she never divulges her precise location, but that is no issue. Her resolute and candid consciousness is easily detected by my ability. Samluch is situated south of the monster, a hundred meters below the surface.

The enemy is nearby, albeit at a considerable depth. It seems I must create some distance and execute a diagonal dive.

"There's one problem. I'm not a mole," I confess.

"Well, that's just how you are, isn't it? Your **Commandment** is quite inconvenient, huh? But don't worry, everything will be fine now," she reassures.

If I were to impact the ground at high speed in my normal state, I would either bounce off or suffer a crash. If a drill is required for our salvation, then let me become the drill.

"Make a bigger hole, Quinn. And simultaneously pierce through this hulk," she directs.

"I'll be utilized... I mean, what?!" I stammer in response.

Upon receiving the dubious command, my body transforms into a comet. The approaching tentacle shatters, and I plunge into the monster's main body, tearing through an unimaginable mass of flesh.

Pain.

Stench.

Filth...

I cannot suffocate, but it could crush me.

My comparison to a heart was accurate—the monster is a mountain of muscles. Fibers stretch and contract, enveloping and squeezing me, attempting to expel the foreign intrusion.

"Show me what you can do. I know you can," she urges.

Reckless order, once again.

With explosive acceleration, I finally break through the flesh mountain. Solid ground awaits me behind it, and I must now fight relentlessly against the bedrock. Such rough treatment—I may be an instrument, but even I refuse to endure it silently. She was fortunate this went well. If it had gone slightly less successfully, only a heroic death would await us.

I underestimated her. I must remember that. Wild creatures are formidable. I encountered Samluch here, a potential warrior candidate. She occupies the same position I assumed three years ago. Whether I truly have the right to bring her with me to the Sacred Realm remains in doubt... but I lack the decisive vote, so it is inconsequential. In any case, I am here.

"...Sorry for the wait. Glad to see you're safe," I finally speak.

Underground, where I made my way, lies a small space—apparently, ancient ruins—that trapped the girl I sought.

Only her head is visible. She resembles a wild animal, with flaming red hair. An optimist might call her a beauty with a spark, while a realist would liken her to a barbarian.



"Oh, how filthy and smelly you are," she remarks.
And whose fault do you think that is?

I pierced a colossal lump of meat and immediately burrowed into the ground, leaving me covered in an incomprehensible mixture of mud and slime. It's all her fault.

"Don't be angry, Quinn. I'm sure someone like you will love that scent," she teases.

"We're not discussing that. The situation is grave," I retort.

I don't have time to chat with her. I inform her that we are the last survivors and that my impromptu flight could not have killed the **daeva**.

"Just great. Incompetent men got themselves caught. Is the Sacred Realm lacking capable personnel?" she scoffs.

"Unfortunately, that's the reality. We are currently regaining our strength," I explain.

"After being at the forefront twenty years ago?... It doesn't matter. Just get me out already."

Having received her request, I proceed to excavate the rubble. I will fulfill the order regardless, but I must admit, I do not fully comprehend it. It seems unlikely that Samluch's condition is so severe that she couldn't escape on her own. A savage like her wouldn't easily allow herself to be buried alive. As I ponder these thoughts, I continue my work, and soon, the answer becomes clear.

"Samluch, you..."

She has lost an arm and a leg. Her right arm is missing up to the elbow, and her left leg is severed at the thigh.

"Why didn't you mention that the wounds needed urgent treatment?"

She didn't show any signs of it, so I was unaware. Despite the severity of her injuries, there is minimal bleeding—dangerous in its own right. Without utilizing the feather's gift promptly, there will be no chance to help her. But I refuse to admit it.

Don't waste time.

"But..."

Had she ordered me to heal her, I could have achieved a greater effect. While regrowing limbs may not be possible, I could have eliminated the threat to her life. Yet she refuses, wanting me to leave her because a cripple is useless in battle.

Then why did she call me?

I cannot decipher her thoughts.

"It's nothing to me. Well, it's my first time losing an arm and leg, but it's for the best. Lucky," Samluch says, leaning on her arm and looking at me fearlessly.

Suddenly, the surroundings tremble. The **daeva** above has noticed us and draws nearer.

"No time for explanations. This is my **Commandment**," she declares.

In an instant, a tentacle breaks through the ceiling...

"Quinn, grant me the gifts of attack and flight," she demands.

...followed by a burst of crimson light.

"Oh-oh-oh-or-ra-ah!" she cries out.

Flashing alongside her battle cry, her "left leg" shatters the tentacle into pieces. The surrounding rocks crumble, revealing the sky through the opening.

The enemy is visible.

"I'll handle the rest. Leave it to me," Samluch confidently says, flashing a not-so-rude smile.

Taking off with a jump, she soars into the air. And that is only the beginning of her dance. Arriving late to the surface, I become a witness to an indescribable spectacle.

Right punch, left kick.

For a woman, Samluch possesses a large physique, yet she remains human. However, each of her strikes seems to land on a colossal, mountain-like creature, causing the earth to quake with every motion. Her limbs may be absent, leading an observer to perceive her actions as futile. But Samluch continues to unleash blow after blow upon her target. And they hit.

Her strikes cause the air to tremble like a tsunami. The movement of something incredibly fast, heavy, and immense. As though an invisible giant stands in her place. Perhaps the answer lies in the flickering red light at the moment of impact. I focus on it, and then understanding dawns upon me, rendering me speechless.

Samluch possesses both arms and legs—not made of flesh and blood, but rather auras. Ghostly limbs woven from pulsating life energy. This radiance transforms into a scarlet light, taking shape for a brief moment, growing exponentially upon impact. My rough estimate suggests nearly five hundred of them.

My comparison to an invisible giant seems apt. Samluch's height now exceeds nine hundred meters, even with just her right arm and left leg. It is only logical that a being of such mass can pulverize mountains. Impressive is an understatement. And the determination of a girl who can bring such absurdity to life elicits nothing but reverence from me.

Clearly, she has undertaken a weighty and stringent **Commandment**.

In essence, it represents the following: Samluch refuses treatment. Samluch smiles and claims that such occurrences are commonplace. She even considers the loss of limbs fortunate, and judging by her current state, the more injured she becomes, the stronger she grows. Her limitation likely lies in her inability to heal wounds. Though they may appear closed from the outside, they remain open. She endures constant pain, both physical and mental. In a way, she embodies the ideal warrior.

With every battle and injury, Samluch grows stronger. Her ghostly limbs are the trophies she has earned, a source of pride. By neglecting treatment, her missing body parts regenerate in a bizarre manner, fueled by her fighting spirit. Using this power in combat seems to amplify her abilities in proportion to the wounds she sustains.

How long can she draw upon this compensation for pain?

And what happens if she exhausts it?

Losing her spectral limbs is manageable, but an extended reckless battle may violate her **Commandment**.

This technique is undeniably dangerous, necessitating a swift end to the fight. I consider intervening but remain still, as she told me to "leave the rest to me." The situation is precarious.

Samluch holds a significant advantage over the **daeva**, increasing our chances of victory. Yet, I can't shake a foreboding feeling. This **daeva** couldn't have appeared out of nowhere. Its immense size and destructive potential make it a second-ranked threat in the Sacred Realm, comparable to the kings of evil.

Could we have missed such a menace?

If it's a newborn, it's already too powerful. Our primary objective is to find a certain **yazata**, someone who defies rules and orders. In this Sacred Realm, they are known as the most violent. Their presence here suggests something extraordinary. The locations they visit always turn to ash, drenched in blood.

We were tracking their trail, but instead encountered an unidentified **daeva**. Could this be a sign?

The sinister thoughts drag me into a bottomless swamp. Since I'm currently ordered to hold my position, I can only return to our original mission.

Find him.

Summon him.

He is more dangerous, more violent, and more monstrous than anything else. But I believe he can disperse even the darkest clouds, surpassing them with an even more concentrated darkness.

So, please, answer. Where are you, Magsarion...

Just as words of hope escape my lips with his name...

"Ha-ah-ah-ah!"

A resounding battle cry echoes, and Samluch's raised right hand ignites with a crimson flame. The multiplied strength pulsates in her fist, signaling the imminent strike of a decisive blow.

"By... lu... chi-i-i-i!"

The ghostly limb slams its open palm onto the **daeva**, obliterating it with catastrophic force. The mountain of flesh crumbles under the impact, reduced to a bloody mess. Only Samluch remains, panting in the aftermath.

"Well, how about that? Nothing to worry about," she says with a satisfied smile, though her fatigue is evident.

I fly closer to her and offer my praise.

"Excellent work. You truly surprised me."

"I thought home-grown warriors were nothing," she retorts, then adds, "Your **Commandment** is strict, but..."

Such a perilous power, teetering on the edge of life and death, could destroy her at any moment. It's an extreme case even among the **Commandments**.

"I'm carefree by nature. I don't act until the thunder strikes. So, don't make such a face," she says, ruffling my hair.

Her actions erase my anxiety, as victory at the cost of four fallen comrades should be celebrated.

"Meanwhile, we're out of feathers. What do we do if we're stuck here?"

"We can send a signal for help or wait for someone to notice our absence. Either way, it will take time. In the first case, my 'voice' will reach them in three or four days."

"Right, and in the second case, we can't expect an immediate response because they're not idle either."

"Exactly."

"Understood. Let's wait patiently. In the meantime, let the survivors provide us with sustenance. We deserve a reward."

Samluch's innocence surprises me, but I believe it's for the best. Even without medical intervention, she still needs rest.

"You should consider prosthetics. Regardless of your **Commandment**, it would make things easier."

"I'm used to it. I'd prefer Sacred Realm ones, but I'll settle for anything now. With this hand, even eating will be difficult."

Samluch shrugs wearily, then stands tall and mutters to herself.

"Am I finally a great warrior of good? Honestly, I prefer working for myself in the middle of nowhere..."

"With your strength, you'll be objectively more useful as a **yazata**. The Sacred Realm is home to a variety of people, and I'm sure you won't be bored when... Is something wrong?"

Samluch's face darkens, and I follow her gaze, finding no words.

"You're kidding... How is this possible?"

The crushed **daeva** begins to regenerate, its scattered pieces reassembling before our eyes.

"Damn it, Quinn, we can't just sit and watch!"

We can't silently witness what's happening here. We approach the monstrous entity and attack until it's fully resurrected. However, no matter how much we tear and shred it, its regeneration outpaces our efforts. It's already recovered by around fifty percent without showing any signs of a counterattack.

"Samluch, how many more times can you use your technique?"

"I'm not sure I can even use it once at full power. I'll try now!"

Samluch gathers her strength, coiling herself like a bowstring. The searing burst of energy indicates her resolve to give everything. Only unwavering determination could ignite such intensity. In her eyes, I see a readiness to push herself to the brink.

Is it worth it?

Is there no other way out?

No other options come to mind, but if this doesn't work, we'll be in a hopeless situation. Still, I have no right to stop her. It goes against my **Commandment**.

In that case, what do I...

"Are you there, doll?"

"Ha!..."

Suddenly, a "voice" resonates in my head, jolting through my body like an electric current. It's a chilling voice saturated with boundless bloodlust. If a speechless creature could hear it, they might compare it to a gust of dry wind. Yet, beneath the surface, there's heavy, seething hatred and rage.

I recognize it. There's no mistaking it. It's "his" consciousness.

"You flew past me, unnoticed, until I caught sight of you. Don't overstep your boundaries."

"What?!"

Samluch exclaims, sensing something amiss. She halts the creation of the ghostly limb, and the **daeva's** massive body begins to bulge in various places. It's as if something is about to burst out of it.

"This is my prey," a voice declares.

In the next instant, the monster's body explodes from within, showering us in a gruesome rain of blood and flesh. And there, standing before us, is Magsarion.

"Magsarion... What's wrong with him?"

Samluch asks, her shock tinged with aggression. And it's understandable.

Magsarion is different from everyone else. Clad in sinister armor without a single blemish, adorned with countless blood stains and dents from battles. His eyes emit an infernal glow, visible even through his helmet, concealing his face. The scent of the grave and an icy coldness exude from him, akin to the grim reaper. There's an aura of ferocity and cruelty, as if from the devil himself. In many ways, he defies the very essence of **ashavans**, with a way of life rooted in black emotions, bloodlust, and an unfathomable abyss of darkness that continuously brings destruction.



Even high-ranking **daevas** don't emanate that level of danger. But he is a **yazata**, a renegade of the Sacred Realm, a raging blade accredited with great military accomplishments. He is

the most challenging individual for me to assess, which is why he piques my interest the most.

"Hey, say something already!" Samluch demands.

"Calm down, Samluch. This is Magsarion. He is... our ally," I interject, turning towards her.

Since Samluch has expressed her desire to join the Sacred Realm, it's my duty to spread the word, and it doesn't breach my **Commandment**.

"For a long time, he ignored orders to return to headquarters, and finding him was our main task. We knew he was on this planet, but couldn't locate him for some reason..."

Now it's clear. Magsarion was inside the **daeva**, and its malevolence acted as interference, making it challenging to pinpoint his exact location.

However, if you're looking for a devil, where better than hell itself?

I know from personal experience that with Magsarion, we will undoubtedly vanquish the enemy. But the problem lies not in that, but in the process, or rather, the precise outcome. His fighting style cannot be deemed elegant. In a way, we need to brace ourselves for the worst, but time is not on our side. The accursed monster has begun to regenerate once again.

"What are you planning to do... Maybe he'll answer you, Quinn. Since he was inside, he probably knows its weak point," Samluch suggests.

"Magsarion, can you tell us what you know?" I inquire, hoping for a response.

Magsarion listens to our pleas in silence, but soon he speaks, his voice low.

"What's the point if you couldn't handle such trash?" he retorts.

"What?!" Samluch exclaims in disbelief.

Oh, this is bad. I had a hunch, but Samluch and Magsarion are truly incompatible. Frankly, I'm uncertain if they can find common ground.

"Well, that's how it is... Yes, you yourself couldn't do anything. But he had been fighting this brute before we arrived" I say, attempting to bridge the gap.

"I can always kill him."

Magsarion states this nonchalantly, disregarding the shocked Samluch, and continues his monologue.

"But the source must be destroyed. That's what I was seeking. And to a large extent, I've obtained it."

His choice of words is peculiar, but he divulges nothing further. Instead, he crouches down and, assuming the form of a spear, points the tip of his colossal, bloodied sword toward the monster. It's evident he's about to do something reckless, so I raise my voice.

"Wait. You are strictly forbidden from taking anyone's life unless they are your enemies. This is a direct order from His Majesty Sirius. Violation of this order will result in your exclusion from the **yazata**."

Magsarion is solely focused on eradicating evil, and he seems to disregard the consequences or the weaknesses of others. His actions have often been met with severe criticism.

So far, his achievements have granted him some leniency, but the leadership's patience is wearing thin. While it may be a formality, it will undoubtedly cause me great inconvenience. Yet, despite everything, I can't help but feel a desire to observe him a little longer.

"Please, listen to me," I implore, my words devoid of personal opinion, merely following the instructions given to me. However, there's a strain within me, an inner creaking reaching its limits.

If I possessed a soul, it would be torn apart by the cold, the nausea, and the decay I feel. Deep down, I know that, despite appearances, my motives are driven by personal interests.

"Hey, Quinn, are you alright?" Samluch asks, noticing my trembling and the crumbling of my insides. I continue to keep my gaze fixed on Magsarion, even as I tremble with small quakes.

Empty words hold no sway over him, and I know there's no other way to make him listen. We lock eyes for a few seconds, and just as I feel myself losing consciousness...

"Then do your part. Lift him into the air," a sudden order pierces through me.

"What?" I gasp.

The overwhelming cold that enveloped me dissipated instantly. Simultaneously, I receive an order... Or was it just my imagination? Did Magsarion actually sigh?

"Do it, even at the cost of your life, doll," Magsarion's words reach me.

"It will be done," I respond, accepting my role without a hint of doubt.

As an instrument left behind by my master, doubt does not even cross my mind. With the speed of a bullet, I swiftly approach the monster's underbelly, accompanied by a trail of red light.

"I still don't understand what's happening, but we just need to launch it, right?" Samluch asks.

"Yes, Magsarion will handle the rest," I reply.

By this point, the enemy has fully regenerated its original form. It lets out a howl and thrusts a flurry of tentacles in our direction, but it's too late. In perfect synchronization, my right leg and Samluch's left leg describe an arc and propel us upwards. I pay no heed to any weight limits; the limits of weaponry are not mine to determine. Every time I transform, obeying the orders of my master..

If I, if the warriors who wield me have sworn to defeat my father, then what good are we if we cannot overcome a mere mountain?

The impact of both feet hitting the target ignites a burst of fireworks in the air. Helpless, the colossal **daeva's** carcass ascends, and we can only await the final blow. And in that very moment, the bloodthirsty blade of Magsarion strikes.

A black, unyielding will, resembling tongues of hellish flames, rushes forth, relentless and determined to annihilate everything in its path.

"Saam, Saam, Saam, Saam... Shebatir, Alastor."

Let everything perish. No, it will be obliterated...

No one who has witnessed Magsarion baring his fangs has ever survived. In other words, he remains invincible, and here, too, the outcome is beyond doubt. It is a massacre rather than a victory, an embodiment of disaster.

Blinding light blinds and a deafening roar deafens. A shockwave reverberates through every fiber of our beings, overpowering all senses at once. Even as mere observers, we can feel it, but the fate of the one targeted by this attack is more than evident. Without a shred of doubt, that **daeva** ceases to exist. It was not crushed; it simply vanished. Not a trace remains, not even the tiniest fragment.

This is Magsarion's favored method of extermination—one that leaves no room for evil. After such thorough annihilation, no amount of regeneration can aid the fallen foe. It is nothing short of sheer brute force, but in the end, such an assault proves to be the epitome of strength. It is the living embodiment of the overwhelming brutality of the "individual."

He pays no mind to the collective, yet he still aligns with the forces of good.

Perhaps it is within this contradiction that the answer so sought after by my father lies. But it is a miracle too merciless, too ruthless...

"Please... don't go... My duty is to... bring you..."

The gift of flight comes to an end, it seems. I believe I am falling, but with the paralysis still gripping me, it is hard to ascertain for certain.

Bring where?

Duty to whom?

Is it before the Sacred Realm or in front of my father? Unable to draw the line between the two, I succumb to unconsciousness.

3

It took me two days to regain consciousness and restore basic bodily functions. I can only recount what transpired through the accounts of others.

Apparently, we were saved by the inhabitants of a nearby village who had managed to escape the destruction. They took both Samluch and me under their care. Upon hearing this, I felt a tinge of unease, mainly due to Samluch's Commandment. Nevertheless, through sheer willpower or some other force, Samluch managed to muster the strength to move her lips, fully aware that her life depended on it.

"Don't treat me for anything," she firmly asserted.

The villagers were understandably surprised and perplexed, but in the end, everything seemed to work out fine. They are simple people, readily willing to fulfill any request from their saviors, no matter how peculiar. The **ashavans**, being honest and dutiful, accord us due respect.

Thanks to their kindness, I was able to recuperate. I sent a message to the Sacred Realm and now we simply await our departure. However, we have lost Magsarion once again. For now, we should be grateful that we have successfully survived such a trying ordeal.

"Ah, my dear! Pour another jug... What? Oh, nothing, nothing. It's just that everything in my stomach needs disinfecting," Samluch cheerfully exclaims, a touch intoxicated.

Seated at a vast table in the village square, she acts as though she owns everything upon it—devouring and imbibing without restraint. True to her plan of indulging in a feast after the ordeal, as soon as she woke up, she wasted no time in issuing instructions to others, and this is the result.



Even the initially worried villagers caught onto Samluch's straightforward nature, and at some point, the purpose of the gathering slipped away. Having just liberated themselves from the threat of the **daeva**, they rightly revel in the joyous occasion. I must admit, I too find myself embracing this atmosphere. It is a rarity in the Sacred Ralm, and thus, I am glad to be surrounded by so many happy and lighthearted souls.

More often than not, there is a sense of determination or a thirst for revenge... It feels as if a castle constructed of anger and sorrow stands adjacent to the mind. It is tranquil and serene, yet one cannot deny that at times, it seems to lack sufficient air. There is a sense of isolation, as if everyone is cloaked in mourning. Although, given what they have endured, one can perhaps understand... I hold steadfast hope that Samluch's hospitable spirit may, in the future, somehow alter this dynamic.

There may still be battles to fight, but is that not what befits a temple of heroes?

However, it would be wise for her to rein in certain habits. For instance, the way she appropriated pieces of armor from a local blacksmith without permission and affixed them to herself in lieu of prosthetics. Or how she casually fastened them to her body with bolts, ensuring they wouldn't accidentally come loose. Such behavior is uncivilized, impolite, and frankly, quite painful to witness. It would do her good to cease such actions.

"Hm? What is it, Quinn? Is something amiss on my face?" Samluch queries.

"No, I simply thought you were in good spirits," I reply.

Samluch deftly continues to partake in her meal and drink, relying solely on her left hand. As I mentioned earlier, her right hand is now an armored appendage, immobile and placed firmly on the table, as if staking her claim: "This is my territory."

In a sense, one could argue that she still utilizes both hands, and perhaps, she would feel rather incomplete without them.

"You know, you're not half bad at enjoying a meal yourself. Your secret's safe with me," I remark.

"I relish in meals. Maybe, thanks to my contraption, I won't die of hunger. And honestly, I don't taste anything, but I can perceive the emotions of those who prepared it."

Let us begin with the fact that I was encouraged to help myself, and I deem it an honor.

"So, Samluch. Do you recall what awaits us upon our arrival in the Sacred Realm? First, an audience with the king and admission to the **yazata**. And I implore you to refrain from any rudeness, at the very least here," I advise.

"Understood. Tell me, are you truly committed to staying?" Samluch inquires.

"Yes, it is my mission," I affirm.

The order I received from his majesty was clear: find and retrieve Magsarion while eliminating any **daeva** encountered along the way. In other words, only half of the task has been accomplished thus far. Until I receive further instructions to return, it is not within my right to do so.

"Magsarion, huh... I don't think he'll make a good husband," Samluch remarks with a hint of displeasure, though it's hard to discern whether she's joking from her eyes. I suppose even she was taken aback by his presence.

"And how exactly did he pull off that last trick? There was a sudden explosion, and we were thrown off, so I couldn't make sense of anything. I couldn't even land a decent blow on that bastard, but he... It doesn't sit well with me!" she continues, her frustration evident.

"It's difficult for me to provide a precise explanation as well. As you know, I was struck too and found myself in the same predicament as you."

"But can you believe it? I understand that you two have a history together, not to mention the fact that when he emerged, you looked as though we had already emerged victorious,"

Perhaps due to her pride, Samluch can't let go of this topic. Since she asked, I can't help but offer an answer, although I emphasize that these are merely my personal conjectures.

"I suppose it's some sort of glitch," I begin.

"A forbidden technique that deviates from the standard application and exploits a loophole in the system... It's hard to explain... Let me show you."

I retrieve a fist-sized citrus fruit from a basket on the table and pluck a solitary pea from a nearby plate.

"The Gifts of Saam and Kshatra enhance the density of matter. In simple terms, they make things larger and heavier. Just like how this fruit is more nutritious and flavorful compared to a single pea."

With that said, I return them to their respective places and then take a paper napkin. Adorned with intricate patterns, it reveals Samluch's bemused expression when held up against the light.

"On the other hand, the Gifts of Fravard and Shebatir make matter thinner, lighter, and smaller. To escape the grip of gravity, distance, and other laws of physics, one must become something intangible and unreliable. Do you follow?" I explain.

Samluch impatiently scratches her head with her left hand, searching for an answer.

"So, do they mix well?" she asks.

"Exactly. The Gifts of Enhancement and Transportation are challenging to combine. The larger and heavier you become, the harder it is to move. Conversely, the thinner and lighter you are, the more fragile you become," I clarify.

"I suppose you can understand that. When you used Saam and Fravard simultaneously, their effects were diluted. However, if you were to use just one of them, its effect would be stronger. Though, from a perspective of balance, it is generally acceptable to employ them in equal measures. An artillery piece that can't hit its target or a swift yet delicate aircraft is far less practical than a mounted rider. Hence, we typically utilize the Gifts in such a manner," I continue.

"I understand that. But if I recall correctly, Magsarion..." Samluch interjects.

"Yes, Magsarion employed a fourfold Saam and Shebatir... Under such circumstances, the latter is unable to function properly. If it were Fravard, he would simply plummet to the ground. However, Shebatir operates in a slightly different manner," I explain further.

I fold the napkin in my hands, demonstrating how the corners, originally distant from each other, converge at a single point.

"This is teleportation, a shortcut that connects distant locations while disregarding the space in between. You can envision it as a hole opening in space, creating a direct path."

"A hole... So, it means..." Samluch seems to have grasped the concept.

Indeed, amplification essentially enlarges its target. And the larger the object, the more challenging it is for it to pass through the "hole." What happens then?

"Most likely... it becomes uncontrollable. What follows is mere speculation on my part, but I believe that even if the process of instant transfer to the destination is initiated, it usually fails to complete. Consequently, he resorts to an alternate method to achieve his goal. For instance, sheer speed," I conclude.

If we consider the phenomenon itself, it degrades completely, not even being initiated. Ultimately, it will undoubtedly consume more time than teleportation. However, the velocity involved remains incredibly high. A "large and heavy" object hurtles toward its target, obliterating everything in its path.

"The outcome can potentially combine strength and speed, two qualities that are typically incompatible. Yet, even if we assume this conjecture is correct, it's unlikely to be reproducible. Timing, the balance of amplification, teleportation coordinates, and numerous other factors must be taken into account... To unlock the secret of maximum efficiency and firepower, one must possess unwavering dedication, and Magsarion achieved this through intuition and experience."

In an effort to convey this in more accessible terms, I summarize my perspective.

"He's a determined individual," I remark.

Samluch lets out an odd sigh, lacking the strength for surprise or anger. She looks at me through narrowed brows, then points her finger.

"Remember when I said there are times when you don't seem like yourself? I'll reiterate: it's the same here. And overall, with such speed and penetrating power, he himself should have been crushed to a pulp. Or does he possess some otherworldly armor?" she questions.

"You have a keen observation. That's correct," I affirm.

I nod, and Samluch's eyes widen in astonishment. Her genuine reaction showcases her innocence, a quality that is impossible to remain unaffected by.

"Magsarion's armor is the creation of my father. I don't know its specific functions, but it's reasonable to assume that it's not an ordinary defense," I explain.

"...So, he's your brother?" she asks.

"That appears to be the case," I respond.

I don't hide the fact that my father is the King of Evil, which may pose problems. Sometimes, relatives find themselves on opposing sides, as the **Avesta** holds greater significance than such familial ties. Everyone understands that I belong to the **ashavans**. Therefore, no one shuns me, especially considering that both **yazatas** and **daevas** constantly vie for my father's services. Even if all the engineers, scientists, and sorcerers of the universe were gathered, they wouldn't be able to replicate his extraordinary skills.

This is yet another aspect of my father, he continues to scatter his creations far and wide even now, much like he once did with me. The King of Evil, the Workshop of Destruction, the despicable farn... He embodies absolute vice, offering immense power to its possessor and perpetuating conflicts while coveting everything and anything. That is how the world knows him.

"Well, are there other creations of your father in the Sacred Realm?" Samluch inquires.

"There are a few. They are mostly sealed away, unused. However, since we cannot allow them to fall into enemy hands, finding and retrieving them is one of our important duties," I disclose.

"I see... So, collecting **yazatas** and garbage, huh?" Samluch remarks while gnawing meat off a bone, seemingly disinterested in the topic.

Even if Magsarion's remarkable feats were made possible by his armor, she likely suspects that it's not without risks. It's more probable that he endures some form of curse. In that sense, they share similarities. Both of them fight despite the pain, concealing their suffering with unwavering resolve. In fact, they draw strength from it. They both harbor an aversion toward their own kind. It's difficult for me to imagine them ever finding common ground, but a part of me hopes they can somehow work together—a miracle of sorts.

"Well... I'll have to do that as well now. You'll need to learn how to collaborate with others, so tell me about your **Commandment**. In the meantime, I'll share mine," Samluch proposes.

"As you wish. It's indeed an important topic," I acknowledge.

Since it's evident that we'll soon become true comrades-in-arms, it's essential to share the information we have. Samluch's offer catches me off guard, but I have no reason to object.

"Let me begin with myself. You've probably already deduced most of it, but if you have any questions, feel free to ask."

"In that case, tell me about the connection between your wounds and the release of energy."

Her explanation is straightforward, aligning with her straightforward nature, and I grasp the main idea. To put it simply, if we consider all of Samluch's wounds received thus far as a hundred percent, then the loss of an arm and a leg equates to around seven or eight percent. Multiplying the former by the latter gives an approximation of the energy available to her, and she can expend as much power in a single strike as the total number of wounds she's sustained. Therefore, if I understand correctly, with such a balance in the recent battle, she could unleash her most potent attack eight times. It's a dangerous ability, to say the least.

"To be honest, I'm not entirely sure what would happen if I were to use too much fuel. It's something I haven't tried yet, and my enemies haven't lived long enough to find out."

"However, there is a chance that it's indeed possible."

"But I do worry about the risks involved, as I don't have a desire to die myself."

Samluch denies any accusations with a snort, but her denial lacks conviction. Her **Commandment** has taken the form of "Keep living with all your wounds," which makes her well-suited for long battles but by no means makes her immortal.

The condition is that it's not too late to do something. If she gains strength by refraining from all treatment, any incurable or useless-to-heal wound can become fatal. Comparing this with the gift of Haoma bestowed upon us, it won't help if there's nothing left of the head or heart.

For people like Samluch, self-awareness and hot blood are intertwined. Losing both would mean the end of her life, and I'm certain she feels the same way.

"Well, what is your Commandment? There doesn't seem to be much you can do, but I understand it depends on the circumstances and how you're treated. How about usually? What do you do when nothing happens?" Samluch asks, her tone teasing.

"I make calls and listen," I reply.

"For example, right now, I'm sending my 'voice' into the depths of space, relaying the details of what's happening. If my call is heard, it means they have the potential to become **yazatas**... In any case, I never forget about our supply problem, so it's one of my important duties."

"Ah, so you help replenish our ranks then?" Samluch remarks.

"By the way, I used to hear your voice sometimes too. So, I wasn't imagining it?"

"That's right. Since the range is extensive, it's difficult to achieve a significant effect. On the other hand, my hearing is quite acute. I can listen to all voices at the same time," I explain.

I've been doing this since the day my father and I separated. I listen to prayers, learn about people's desires, and try to understand what miracles they seek. I've heard that Vohu Mana possesses a similar power, but since he shouldn't be bothered too much in his current state, I assist him with this. Prayers are cries for help, but for us, they become a call to action. However, whether to send a **yazata** or not is decided by his holy majesty. Ignoring Samluch's teasing, I give a bitter smile. I was utterly surprised when I discovered that I possessed the same power as the Celestial Spirit, but now I embrace it wholeheartedly. It's possible that my father was supposed to meet Vohu Manu twenty years ago, and he may have gotten this idea from him.

"Okay, I think I understand now. Can I ask you another question, Quinn?" Samluch asks.

"What is it?" I reply, feeling like I've already disclosed everything.

I thought I had told her everything, so I'm unsure what else she wants to discuss. Samluch finishes her drink and lowers her voice.

"You were about to break your **Commandment** before Magsarion. Why did that happen? And why weren't you punished?" she asks, her persistence fueled by alcohol.

I'm at a loss for words. It's a difficult question to answer, and more importantly, I don't want to answer it. I had assumed Samluch was too simple-hearted to notice, but she's more perceptive than I thought.

"You're quite intriguing. Tell me!" she urges, her words slurred.

She's intoxicated and in high spirits. Perhaps by tomorrow morning, she'll have forgotten everything, but for now, she's persistent in a way that only drunk individuals can be. I consider running away, but I can't. She's asking me to tell, but I can't.

"Hey, what's that, little one? The adults are talking. You should go," she says, addressing Reilly.

"What? But..." Reilly protests.

"Samluch, you can't treat children that way. It's okay, young lady, let's talk. Please have a seat," I say, trying to redirect the conversation.

"Really? Hooray!" Reilly exclaims with joy.

Since there are no available chairs nearby, Reilly jumps onto my lap with a wide smile on her face. It surprises me, but I have no intention of scolding her. After all, we are guests in her home, and she deserves respect.



"Hehehe, you know, my name is Reilly," she says.

"Is that so? My name is Quinn. How old are you?" I ask.

"I'm six!" Reilly replies.

"Well, you look much more grown-up than I did at your age. However, it's quite late, and you should be in bed. There are many bad adults around," I say, concerned for her well-being.

"No, it's fine. Dad said today is a holiday, so I can stay up!" Reilly insists.

"Eh... What is this?" I mutter.

Out of the corner of my eye, I see Samluch react sharply, but I choose to ignore it. Right now, I am here for Reilly. While I entertain the girl who's joyfully playing on my lap, a man who resembles her father approaches. His consciousness is filled with gratitude, guilt, and love for his daughter. He is both similar and different from my father—perhaps this is what an average father looks like.

"Sorry for causing so much trouble... Reilly, don't bother our guests," he says apologetically.

"It's no trouble. Reilly and I are friends," I respond.

I stroke the girl's round and soft cheek, and I continue speaking.

"You shouldn't worry your dad. It's late now, so go to bed. We can continue our conversation tomorrow," I suggest.

"Really? Are you really going to play with me tomorrow?" Reilly asks with excitement.

"Yes, I promise. Now, off you go," I say, lifting Reilly into her father's arms.

However, the lively girl squirms out of his embrace and runs off on her own.

"Eh, you... I apologize for her restlessness. I will definitely report back, you can be sure."

"What are you talking about? We should be the ones apologizing. We've caused you so much trouble"

"You don't have to worry about that. Everyone is immensely grateful to you, and my wife probably found peace," he says, his words casting a shadow over his face, tinged with sadness.

"Really, your wife..." I trail off, unsure of how to respond.

"Yes... But again, you don't have to worry. Besides, Reilly finally smiled. It's all thanks to you," he continues, attempting to lighten the mood.

"Qui-i-inn!" I hear a sudden cry, and I turn around to see Reilly waving both hands at me. With all the strength of her little body, she showers me with sincere emotions.

"You're the most beautiful, I love you!" she exclaims, her voice filled with genuine adoration.

Caught off guard, I find myself at a loss for words. Whether out of embarrassment or surprise, I simply wave back at her. Reilly's father walks over to her, bowing in our direction every now and then, and I continue waving until they are out of sight.

"Hmm, ho-oh, in-from what is it..." I mutter to myself, still a bit stunned by the encounter. But I stay behind, alone at the table.

"Quinn is beautiful, did I hear you right? And what about me, then? Hmm," Samluch's voice interrupts my thoughts, her tone teasing.

"Why are you so offended?"

She continues, a mischievous smile playing on her lips. I can't help but smooch at her remark. Despite her appearance and mannerisms, she still manages to cause me trouble with her antics. With her disposition, it's no wonder children are not fond of her.

"Yes, it is. I just noticed that you enjoy such compliments. Somehow I didn't expect that."

I respond, attempting to brush off her remark "How rude! I'm still a girl too. Of course, I'll be glad if someone calls me beautiful," she retorts, my tone indignant.

"Oh-oh..."

I mutter, realizing my mistake.

"What's wrong with your face?" Samluch questions, her expression growing increasingly sinister.

It's becoming clear that she's up to something mischievous. I should have known better than to underestimate her. But before I can react, the atmosphere around us changes.

"Hey, listen here, guys! This girl is looking for a boyfriend!" Samluch announces loudly, drawing the attention of the men in the tavern.

Within moments, men of all shapes and sizes begin crowding around our table. Drunk and with leering eyes, they gather, seemingly excited by the prospect.

"She says that at work, her conditions are worse than ever. They never even let her go on a date! So, instead of a reward, maybe you can show her how it's done?" Samluch continues, fueling the excitement of the crowd.

An explosion of joyful exclamations fills the air, resembling a furious howl from all sides at once. I search desperately for Reilly's father, hoping he can intervene and put an end to this madness. Wait, is Father Reilly here? What about his wife's memory? Has he forgotten all about her? Men... what despicable creatures!

"In general, the price of entry is a thousand asters. If you want to participate, pay up and confess your love to Quinn one by one. The one who makes the best confession will win the unique opportunity to take her on a date! Don't be afraid, she won't refuse anyone!" Samluch declares, her voice dripping with mischief.

I glare at Samluch, a mix of curses and despise welling up inside me. I clutch my sides, unable to believe the absurdity of the situation. But amidst the frustration, there is also a sense of gratitude, albeit a begrudging one, towards Samluch for the honor she unwittingly bestowed upon me.

Well, I suppose I truly lack dating experience, and now, a ten-year-old boy is leading me into it. At the same time, Reilly looks on, her expression less than pleased. Is this really how it's going to be?

How difficult it is... Girls have their own challenges too.

4

Two more days slipped by, marked by a sense of urgency that hung heavy in the air. It fell upon me, the weight of responsibility, to ensure that Samluch was safely escorted away from the village without any untoward incidents. Thus, I devoted these days to aiding in the arduous task of rebuilding the village and engaging with the locals. However, as the third day dawned, the anticipated aid failed to materialize once more.

Anxiety began to claw at my heart, gnawing at the edges of my resolve. I couldn't help but entertain the thought that some unforeseen delay had befallen our potential saviors. Seeking solace in my connection to the Sacred Realm, I sent my 'voice' back, requesting assistance, and resigned myself to waiting.

However, as the fourth day unfolded, my growing suspicions crystallized into certainty. When Samluch, seeking to while away the time, attempted to venture beyond the village boundaries, an ominous truth was revealed.

The space surrounding the village was trapped in a bewildering loop—a disconcerting paradox that confined us within its relentless grip.

Exiting from the north only led one back in from the south, and the same held true for the west and east. It became painfully clear that we were effectively imprisoned within this insidious cycle, held captive in this village and its vicinity. The only conceivable explanation for this unsettling predicament was the emergence of a new **daeva**. None other could account for the bizarre phenomenon that had ensnared us.

Astonishingly, the villagers themselves remained oblivious to the changes that had occurred, and we refrained from disclosing the truth to prevent a wave of panic from engulfing them.

Samluch and I found ourselves caught in the web of uncertainty, not knowing when or from where an attack might be unleashed upon us. Thus, we decided to maintain our outward facade while keeping a watchful eye on our surroundings. Perhaps, in this game of endurance, the most patient would emerge victorious. Yet, we were now deprived of the ability to venture beyond the village, both physically and morally.

In this state of confining entrapment, the arrival of the fifth day became a harbinger of foreboding. And on the seventh day after our encounter with the **daeva**, our situation took a sharp turn for the worse.

Inside the elder's house, which currently served as our dwelling, the walls seemed to close in around us, stifling our movements. Although the house was of a substantial size, it was not spacious enough to lose oneself within. Certainly, it was not vast enough for Samluch to vanish from sight, only to reappear behind me as she strolled along the familiar corridors. This time, we were denied even the semblance of freedom within the confines of the house, let alone the prospect of leaving the village altogether.

"This is absurd," I exclaimed, a note of incredulity seeping into my voice.

"It appears they have realized we have seen through their deceit."

"Most likely," Samluch concurred, her tone laced with a simmering anger.

"Thus, we can draw two assumptions from this."

She paused, her gaze focused, before continuing with a resolute determination.

"Either we are being held captive here to prevent us from interfering with an imminent attack on the villagers, or someone is plotting our elimination in advance. It boils down to the choice of leaving their favorite dish for later or devouring it first—both options carry equal likelihood."

Regardless of the intentions behind our imprisonment, our course of action remained clear.

"Let us escape this place, Quinn," Samluch urged, her voice tinged with regret.

"Apologies to the owner of this house, but we have no other recourse."

"We shall go to do so," I replied, nodding in agreement.

Together, we sought to force our way out, yet no matter which direction we turned, another corridor loomed before us. We were trapped in an endless labyrinth, devoid of even a single window to provide a glimpse of the world beyond. Our futile exertions sapped our strength and took a toll on our spirits. Even if physical stamina remained, the weariness in our hearts became increasingly severe.

This was especially evident in Samluch's resolute demeanor, which wavered under the weight of this seemingly insurmountable predicament.

"Curse it all!" Samluch exclaimed, her frustration erupting forth like a tempest.

"Nothing frustrates me more than this! If they intend to fight, let them show themselves instead of dragging this out!"

But only silence answered her plea, the estate retaining its stillness. I, too, began to harbor concerns, for I lacked the ability to discern the thoughts of those outside our confinement. This realization served as a reminder that we were equally imprisoned within these walls, our minds locked away from the outside world. Anxiety gnawed at my core, fueled by the growing realization that the villagers themselves might be the primary targets of this impending threat. Every passing moment demanded our swift action.

"Do you have a plan, Quinn?" Samluch queried, her voice tinged with a flicker of hope amidst the encroaching despair.

"For now, let us retrace our steps," I suggested.

"If we cannot confront the problem head-on, perhaps we may glean something valuable by retracing our path. It is often the most inconspicuous solution that reveals itself as the key to escape such circumstances."

I presented this idea, grounded in a cold calculation born of trust in my own acumen. However, the outcome proved to be the opposite of what we had hoped for.

"You joke," Samluch retorted, her voice dripping with frustration.

"And now, what more do you say?"

We retraced our path, returning to the room from whence we came, only to find ourselves locked within its confines once more. First, it was the perimeter of the village that imprisoned us, then the walls of the elder's estate, and now even this humble room had become our prison cell. The territory available to us grew narrower with each passing trial. No matter how we left the room, we found ourselves unable to draw closer to the exit. The doorknob remained agonizingly out of reach, mocking our efforts.

A ten-by-ten-meter square room had transformed into our entire world, a world devoid of possibilities. It appeared that if we failed to break free here, the next stage of our confinement would see us imprisoned within a cupboard or a closet—a stifling dead end that offered no respite. Desperation crept into our hearts, mingling with the gnawing guilt that threatened to overwhelm me.

"I am sorry," I murmured, the weight of responsibility heavy upon me.

"I acted rashly, without anticipating the gravity of this situation."

"All right, no use crying over spilled milk," Samluch interjected, her voice firm, devoid of sentimentality.

"Tears will not save us now."

She was right, of course, and yet no glimmer of optimism illuminated the bleak landscape of our thoughts. We continued to lose precious time, confined to this oppressive reality, forced to endure with fraying nerves. And so, when the sound of light, rhythmic knocks reached our ears, we lifted our eyes in cautious anticipation.

"Who could it be?" Samluch muttered under her breath, her gaze piercing the door.

"Answer me!" Instead of receiving a response, the doorknob began to turn. The door creaked open, revealing a figure before us—someone utterly unexpected, yet undeniably real.

It was Reilly, a sweet girl with a smile adorning her face.



"Do not enter," Samluch's voice rang out.

"Stay where you are!"

Reilly stood frozen, a bewildered expression etched upon her features. I regarded her with a mix of suspicion and curiosity, my gaze never leaving her body.

"I ask again, do not come in," I cautioned, my voice tinged with urgency and wariness.

"And do not leave your position."

Samluch's voice was unexpectedly soft, almost reprimanding, as she tried to console Reilly, who was on the verge of tears. There was a sense of urgency in the air, a need to calm her down, to find a solution. At first glance, Reilly appeared unaffected by the strange

happenings around us. She stood before us, holding a tray of breakfast, steam rising from the warm food. It seemed like everything was normal in the village, but we knew deep down that something was amiss. We needed to make sense of it all.

"Thank you for your concern, Reilly," I said, my voice gentle and soothing.

"What do we have for breakfast today?"

Reilly hesitated for a moment before replying, "Um, fish soup with potatoes and a bun. I helped cook a little... Will you have some?"

"It looks delicious," I responded with a smile.

"We would be happy to eat it. But there's something we need you to do first..." I explained to Reilly that she needed to place the tray on the floor and push it towards us.

It may sound strange, like a game, but it was necessary. I assured her that there was no need to be afraid.

"Is that true?" she asked, her eyes searching for answers.

I nodded silently, hoping that Reilly would trust me. Something about her seemed unaffected by the strange phenomenon that had trapped us in this manor. Until we could unravel the mystery, it was best for her to avoid entering the room. She could be in the same predicament as us. Reilly's face bore an indescribable expression as she carefully placed the tray on the floor and pushed it towards us. I couldn't help but be captivated by the realistic drops of spilled soup, the details that seemed painfully tangible.

Curiosity sparked within Reilly, and she asked, "What is this game? Can I come with you?"

"We don't mind," Samluch replied, her voice filled with reassurance.

"But first, you must go through an initiation ceremony and answer a few questions. How is your father doing?"

"He's fine," Reilly responded.

"He said he went to the field."

"And what about the blacksmith?" I asked.

"He's probably chopping wood," Reilly replied, her gaze momentarily shifting.

"Then where is the elder?" Samluch inquired.

"I think he's reading a book in that room," I answered, pointing towards the closed door. Reilly's eyes avoided mine as I asked the next question.

"And what about Umar?" Umar was the boy I had gone on a date with, and Reilly seemed to have taken a liking to him.

But at the mention of his name, she suddenly became guarded, looking away. "I won't say," she stated firmly.

"You can't play with him." I was taken aback by her strictness, her refusal to share.

But observing Reilly closely, I could see no signs of deception. She was behaving just as she normally would. Perhaps there was more to her words than met the eye. Through the connection with Reilly's mind, I was able to gather information about the status and whereabouts of the other individuals I mentioned. And that led to a realization.

"Samluch, perhaps we can leave this place with Reilly," I suggested, my voice barely a whisper.

"Seriously?" Samluch replied, her tone tinged with caution.

"Yes, it's true. But it comes with risks," I explained, aware of the danger we might be exposing Reilly to.

I leaned in closer, speaking quietly. We had suspected that the enemy, the **daeva**, had targeted the villagers instead of directly attacking us. But now it seemed that their true aim was to keep us trapped here, awaiting reinforcements.

"It's likely that the **daeva** isn't confident they can defeat us in battle," I continued.

"So, they're holding us hostage, using the villagers as leverage. But we can't sit here and wait. We have to act."

Samluch nodded, her determination clear. We couldn't afford to lose the initiative, and we had never intended to remain under the enemy's watchful gaze for long. It was risky, but we had to protect the villagers.

"Reilly, we appreciate your kind offer, but it's time for us to leave," I said, trying to keep my voice steady.

"What? Are you leaving already?" Reilly exclaimed, her voice filled with disappointment.

"Yes, as much as we'd like to stay, we can't impose on your hospitality any longer," Samluch responded.

"But before we go, there's something we wanted to ask you..."

"No!"

Reilly's sudden rejection startled me, causing me to recoil instinctively. She was just a child, and though I had expected to console her, I hadn't anticipated this response. Her words spilled out, filled with sadness and frustration.

"You can't leave! You have to stay with us!"

"We didn't lie," I interjected, trying to calm her.

"But there are reasons why we can't stay forever. You have to understand."

"I don't understand!" Reilly shook her head vigorously, refusing to listen. It was almost like a tantrum, but beneath it all, I sensed her sincerity and genuine anguish.

In her words and actions, I could see the loneliness and pain that had plagued her, just as it had affected the other villagers. They yearned for help, for a miracle to save them. And perhaps, despite our own weaknesses, we could offer a glimmer of hope.

"Reilly," I spoke softly, my voice laced with empathy.

"We know that life has been hard for you. Your mother is gone, your father is struggling, and everyone else is sad. But we're here to protect you and the others. We'll find a way to make things better."

Tears streamed down Reilly's face, her small frame overwhelmed with emotions beyond her years. It was a heartbreaking sight, and it stirred something deep within me. We couldn't let her down.

"We'll stay for a little longer," Samluch said, her voice gentle yet determined.

"We'll do what we can to help. But we must also find a way to end the darkness that hangs over this village." Reilly's eyes widened, a mixture of relief and hope shining through her tears.

It was a delicate balance we had to strike, fulfilling our duty while also tending to the needs of the villagers. But for now, we would stay, fighting for a miracle that would dispel the shadows and bring light to their lives. In that moment, as we stood together, I Commandmented to protect Reilly and the villagers, to bring them the miracle they so desperately sought. It was a daunting task, but with Samluch by my side and the prayers of the villagers echoing in our hearts, we would forge ahead, driven by a resolute determination to bring about a brighter future.

"But then you came, and everything changed. Laughter and a sense of joy came back. We knew that everything would be alright with you by our side. But why will you leave us? Do we return to the way things were before? I don't want that. Stay with us always, be our protector... Quinn..."

Samluch gazes at me, her unease visible. I can discern her thoughts without even delving into her mind.

I am a mere instrument, created to heed the prayers of others. Does this mean I am unable to defy the unwavering will of the girl standing before me? This notion may instill fear, but alas, it does not.

"I'm sorry, Reilly, but I cannot. My obligations are governed by priorities."

To fulfill more pressing prayers, I am allowed to overlook the lesser ones. That is why I did not perish when I nearly broke my **Commandment** before Magsarion.

"If desires slightly contradict one another, I can fulfill multiple simultaneously. However, if that is not the case, I give precedence to the stronger yearning."

"What are you talking about? I don't understand, Quinn."

"I am not implying that you or the other villagers are inconsequential. However, this time, your adversary's anger is too formidable."

Through my experience, I can sense disparities in the intensity of desires. Currently, I make choices subconsciously, unable to articulate them in words or numbers. Nonetheless, I grasp that this discrepancy unquestionably exists. Presently, the primary directive bestowed upon me is the one received from my father: the pursuit of a miracle.

Subsequently, it entails the authority of the Sacred Kingdom, the oath sworn before His Majesty Sirius, and even, in a peculiar sense, the distinctive order of Magsarion. Throughout, Father and His Majesty Sirius implore me to persist, to continue functioning as a "universal" tool in the eternal battle between good and evil. This desire, this sheer force of will, stands on a qualitatively different plane—a sort of cursed determination, a loyalty that some may deem madness.

Indeed, the desires of Reilly and the other residents are there, but they must contend with the King of Evil and His Holy Majesty. They simply cannot find a place between those two forces, rendering it impossible for me to solely belong to this village.

"I see, so that's why you..." Samluch need not utter a word, for I can perceive that she has surmised the truth.

Nevertheless, I yearn to keep it concealed. By employing the order of His Most Holy Majesty for my own purposes, I betrayed his trust and should have met an immediate demise. However, thanks to my father's command to gather miracles, I survived. And when I received Magsarion's directive, I was ultimately pardoned. In other words, the prayers of the King of Evil and the Magsarion held greater sway than those of His Most Holy Majesty. I cannot divulge this information. It would undoubtedly lead to complications, potentially harming overall morale.

"Reilly... To fulfill your plea, I would have to self-destruct. That is why I cannot comply. I apologize."

"How can that be..."

Though I have not disclosed all the intricacies of my circumstances, I am clearly defying her wishes. Desperation fills Reilly's eyes, and a profound sense of guilt grips me. This contradiction does not strike me as insurmountable. It is precisely because they are helpless that they beseech salvation. It is precisely because of this that we answer their calls and fulfill our duty. We assert that weakness should not invite misfortune and extend our helping hands. Yet, we push them away, stating that we cannot obey them due to their fragility...

How absurd.

Perhaps individuals like me are the epitome of evil in Reilly's eyes. Shame engulfs me, and I deem it a well-deserved punishment. I am prepared to humbly accept any reproach from the girl when suddenly...

"Was my daily prayer in vain? Does God not care about us?"

"God?..."

I fail to comprehend why she has suddenly uttered this word, and involuntarily, I echo her. I have betrayed Reilly's expectations; no god has any bearing on this matter. Even if she intended the word in its literal sense, it still bewilders me.

Wait, does this village possess any religious beliefs?

Reilly, what god...

Perhaps I have overlooked something crucial, misunderstood everything. Without a clear plan to assuage the situation, I conclude that I must at least pose a question...

Yet, in the next moment, a steel blade bursts forth from Reilly's chest.

Reilly and I are stunned, unable to comprehend the sudden object protruding from her chest and the crimson fluid covering it.

"Ah... Kh, kha!"

Blood fills Reilly's small, flower-like mouth. She only realizes in her final moments what has happened to her, as the light in her eyes fades away. The blade effortlessly withdraws from her lifeless body. Standing behind the blood-stained floor, behind the room's door, is a knight emanating an ominous aura, concealed in fearsome armor.

"This can't be..."

Why, Magsarion?

Why did you do this?

"...Beast!!"

Samluch rushes forward with a scream, but she remains unable to reach the door. Her fists, her voice, her anger—nothing can bridge the infinite distance between them. Yet, Magsarion stands calmly, as though his actions are a given.

"Aren't you a **yazata**?! Why have you become this... this insignificant creature?! I won't forgive you, you'll see, bitch!" Samluch seethes with righteous fury, refusing to relent.

She disregards the insurmountable gap and continues to run and rage. I share her sentiment. I cannot fathom Magsarion's actions. I cannot accept Reilly's unjust death. It is unforgivable. I bear no forgiveness for my own helplessness.

"I was on the verge of accepting you! Recognizing you as an ally, just like me... But why?! What have you done?! Don't just stand there, answer!"

"An ally?"

A voice colder than the frigid depths of the world responds to her. It lacks mockery or pity, almost comically denying any understanding of Samluch's emotions or logic. Instead, it dismisses her with a tone that swats away an annoying fly.

"Naive fool. They don't exist to me."

"Wait, stop, you bastard!" Unheeding of her cries, Magsarion turns and departs.

We are left alone in the room, with only Reilly's lifeless form and the spreading pool of her blood. We remain trapped, unable to even embrace her or turn her body over. It feels as if we are mere set pieces in a cheap play—isolated, powerless, and disregarded by the world, cast aside like insignificant debris. Nevertheless, even if this is our reality, even if it would

be better for us to fade into the background or continue playing our minor roles, we cannot remain idle.

Until we ascertain the truth, until we comprehend the unfolding events, we will continue to strive tirelessly. We will run, explore, break barriers, and leap, regardless of the lack of visible progress. We will resist, over and over again, in an unending cycle of trial and error. In the process, change begins to occur.

The sound of a shattered wall differs. The rooms we stumble upon look the same but carry distinct scents. With every step, Reilly draws closer—almost within reach, almost within our grasp. Finally, our shoes tread upon the blood-soaked ground, and what may be Reilly's final thoughts echo in my mind.

Ah, this is... Truly..

"We've finally made it out... Let's go, Quinn!" Samluch bids a swift farewell and dashes out of the room with the wind.

I watch her depart, then kneel before Reilly, cradling her lifeless form in my arms. She remains warm and tender, even in death. I wipe away the blood that stains her face and gently close her eyes. With every word spoken, it feels as though a weight is lifted from my being.

"...I'm sorry. Your death is my fault." Everything finally falls into place, though it is too late for realization.

A mysterious **daeva**, repeatedly resurrected from the dead. Magsarion's sudden appearance, unexplained by his strength alone. When he mentioned the need to destroy the source, I should have realized. Perhaps then, all of this could have been avoided.

"There is no god, Reilly. Only the **Avesta**... Only the truth bestowed upon us to wage this battle. Hence, I seek miracles, yearn for them, and strive to create them. In this regard, there is no distinction between you and me, Reilly. The crucial point is that, since there is no god to whom prayers can be offered, we must create our own. The outcome is not a result of malice or helplessness, but rather the consequence of this belief."

"My business is not finished. Your sacrifice will not be in vain."

Today's events will become an integral part of the "universal prayers" that will someday give birth to the divine blade of miracle. No, they owe it to become. I swear it again, get up and leave the room.

"I will never forgive you. Whatever happens, no matter what."

Leaving the estate, I see how Magsarion and Samluch are standing opposite each other in the middle of the square. The first one is covered in blood; the second is pale because of excessive anger, but at the same time she speaks in a frighteningly low voice. Around them rise mountains of bodies.

I know every face, I remember their voices and names, but they are not destined to open their mouths anymore. Old men and children, men and women, all killed... Magsarion, who killed all the villagers, still stands calmly. Samluch cannot forgive this. As if she doesn't want to further sully herself with unnecessary words, she silently takes out a dagger. Then she plunges it sharply into her stomach ...

"You are dead."

Crimson fighting spirit heralds the beginning of the battle between the **yazatas**. I don't say anything, don't even try to intervene between them, watch their skirmish for a while, and then leave. It's not about the **Commandment** or anything like that. I understand Samluch's anger, and I can even agree with the logic of Magsarion's act. I just don't think they need to be stopped. Let both do as they see fit, and I will do what I consider necessary myself. Ignoring the clanging behind me and the random consequences of the fight, I walk through the deserted village. I already have an idea where to go, because I stayed there for a long time, so doubts are out of place.

So I soon find "it". Reilly's room in her house... A bizarre object rests on a pedestal, which the unfortunate girl must have been decorating for a long time. I wonder why she never invited me to her room?

Though it's belated, I can't help but regret it. Perhaps if she showed me this "god" in advance, I could immediately tell her that this is wrong. However, a cold-blooded part of me understands that such imaginary scenarios are inevitable. Reilly probably believed that we came because of the "god", and therefore thought that he would not be as useful if we saw him. Or maybe she unconsciously felt guilty. And whatever the truth, we didn't notice it until Magsarion came. The whole tragedy of this village is limited to this.

Always, under any circumstances, Magsarion runs without stopping along the shortest path. A man who gets his way faster and more efficiently than anyone, without a shadow of a doubt cracking down on all enemies on the way...

At least, as far as I know, his fangs and scent will never miss the prey. Even if as a result someone has to be sacrificed.

"Do you really hate them that much? What happened to you..."

No matter how much I whisper, no one will give me an answer. His hatred is too strong, too deep, to understand what is behind it. No, it is quite possible that there is nothing behind it at all. He is only devoted to the **Avesta** with all his being...

I remember that this is exactly what one colleague told me. Oddly enough, this may be the case, but in this case, he will never find peace...

I shake my head, banishing unnecessary thoughts, and pick up the "god" standing in front of me. It is light and small enough to fit in the palm of your hand, and its appearance really could well attract the attention of a child. I don't know if he thought it through in such detail, but in a sense, what happened was inevitable. I, too, became attached to Reilly. Maybe because we are "relatives". With a guilty sigh, I return the same way that I came, with the "god" in my hands.

"This is the cause of all troubles. Apparently Reilly picked it up somewhere."

Magsarion and Samluch are still fighting, even after exchanging dozens of blows. I stand between them and put a god on the ground, no, a magical object.

"It's definitely a father's child."

It looks like he can create **daevas**. And the recent battle, and the current loop, perhaps much more before that

"He did all this, using the thoughts of the villagers as fuel. Am I right, Magsarion?"

The raging warrior says nothing. Instead, the voice is given by Samluch, who bulged her eyes.

"What do you mean, Quinn? What are you talking about? Explain yourself."

"I just did it. We were only able to go outside because the source of power, which was the villagers, was gone. Therefore, we should be grateful to Magsarion."

Samluch is unlikely to agree to this, but these are the facts. The notorious item... could probably be described as sentient quicksilver or ferrofluid. Lying on a pedestal, the silvery body even now continues to change shape at a staggering rate, like a kaleidoscope. Sphere, cylinder, cone, cube, dodecahedron, triakisoctahedron - with each change it pulsates like a heart. Because it really is alive.

With the help of food, which "universal prayers" serve him, he creates the corresponding **daevas**. In other words, it is a wish-fulfilling god. They wanted the **yazatas** to come, and now they wanted to keep them trapped. And so, their desires played out in a cruel, repetitive fashion, even if it meant enduring pain and suffering.

Hence, even if this entity is considered a god, it deserves the epithet of darkness. Its malevolence taints all its "blessings," and due to the villagers' limited knowledge of the

Avesta, they remained unaware of its dangers. In reality, this artifact manipulates even the purest and most virtuous prayers in a merciless manner.

It sacrifices the well-being of many to grant happiness to a select few. While it may have spared the villagers, who acted as its unwitting hosts, it showed no mercy to others. Let us not forget that three cities lay in ruins after the recent battle. And yet, somehow, this village remained unscathed. Its desires and tranquility were sustained by an abundance of bloodshed, and if left unchecked, the number of victims would undoubtedly continue to rise.

"That is why Magsarion insisted on destroying the source. It is highly likely that before we arrived, he had already vanquished the **daeva** numerous times. Yet, as it revived each time, he realized that the core lay elsewhere and began his investigation."

This is how we found ourselves in the present situation. Magsarion became convinced that the village held the key to everything and chose the method that would inflict the least grief. By eliminating all the inhabitants, he starved the god of its sustenance. I believe he targeted Reilly first because he understood that she was the catalyst for it all. Now, all that remains is to obliterate the dark god, and Magsarion's meticulous plan will come to fruition. It is a method that, though thorough, cannot be called anything but heartless. By disregarding his conscience, he found the most efficient means to resolve the situation.

"B-but it's not the villagers' fault. They were ignorant, so killing them was..."

"Could you say the same to those who died due to their actions, Samluch?"

"Kh, well..." I comprehend her intended message, yet I want her to remain silent. No, there is no need for her to say anything further.

"You're right; perhaps they killed without knowing. But does that warrant letting them live so they can redeem themselves? Magsarion eliminated all those involved. No one remains..."

"And you find that acceptable? He could have simply annihilated this abomination without delay!"

Indeed, I share the same sentiment. If only I had grasped the situation faster than Magsarion, I would have destroyed the dark god immediately. However, that cannot be considered a "final solution." Magsarion would dismiss it as naivety. Although I am reluctant to acknowledge or listen to his logic, I yearn to convey it to Samluch somehow.

"As long as the source persists, annihilating the dark god is a daunting task. The **daeva** itself proved to be practically immortal, repeatedly rising from the dead..."

"Shut up. No one asked for your input."

Magsarion's voice cuts short my comparison, laced with disgust, robbing me of the opportunity to say more.

"Whether the artifact exists or not, it makes no difference. People like them will always repeat the same pattern."

His voice seems to spread across the ground, desecrating the piled corpses of the villagers. It is as though he wishes to annihilate them entirely, to strip away even the hope of an afterlife.

"They are chicks waiting to be fed with their mouths wide open. When they receive sustenance, they consider it their due and demand even more. And if their offerings fail to satisfy them, they harbor hatred towards the entire world. They can even commit apostasy."

"..."

Samluch remains silent, her anger dissipating. Yet, now a different sentiment begins to grow within her.

"You fall beneath everyone here, Magsarion. Your hatred covers everything and everyone."

Pity, sorrow, guilt... I experience all of these emotions now.

"I can't fathom why you are so reluctant to forgive anyone, but my **Avesta** still tells me that you are an ally... So, ah, damn it!"

"Samluch?"

She turns her back to me, gazing wearily at the sky, and exhales heavily. "Fine, Quinn. I understand now. If we need to confront your daddy, we need every **yazata**, even I grasp that... But still!"

Samluch faces Magsarion once again, her gaze unwavering.

"Don't worry, I haven't forgiven you yet. We will address it all once we have dealt with everything else."

Perhaps this can be deemed a fitting resolution to our current situation. While there remains a divide between us, we managed to avert discord within our ranks. Samluch stretches and strides away, presumably seeking respite for her troubled mind. I observe her departure, then turn my gaze towards Magsarion.

True to form, he stands amidst the mountains of lifeless bodies and rivers of crimson, seemingly unperturbed by it all.

Magsarion claimed to have no allies.

Does this imply that he solely seeks adversaries?

Even when confronted with the accusation of his own downfall, he remains unswayed. He embodies heartlessness and ruthlessness in their purest form...

Regardless of his actions or the consequences that befall him, he harbors no remorse or compassion. It is not difficult to envision a future where, as Samluch foretold, he stands bereft of companionship. If he continues to traverse this realm, Magsarion will eventually find himself alone amidst a desolate wasteland, much like today...

I am still uncertain whether I should intervene and halt his path or simply observe his journey to its conclusion. And precisely because I am undecided, I cannot abandon my watch over this dangerous individual.

"I shall also return to the Sacred Realm."

The feathers dissipate.

"Very well, your assistance will prove invaluable. However, Magsarion, would you be willing to bury the villagers?"

"Do as you wish."

Every time I engage in conversation with him, an unsettling sensation stirs within me. It is akin to a vague, dreamlike impression—an unreliable feeling—as if we have met in a previous existence, as if we have exchanged something profound. But first, I must squash it.

"Understood."

I set aside that hazy recollection, treating it as an instruction whose priority remains undefined. Thus, he is unlikely to encroach upon my freedom of action.

However, if he disturbs this equilibrium sooner or later, should I await that day or strive to delay it?

Still undecided on my stance, I redirect my focus to a more pressing mission: the annihilation of the village deity.

My unexpectedly fragile sibling shatters effortlessly and fades away. Of course, in an object bereft of any prayers, there is no longer value or significance.

If good succumbs, the same fate shall befall me. All those prayers I have amassed shall vanish in much the same manner.

And thats why I must win.

Chapter 2: Holy King's Dream - Translated by @ashmxt.t

1

This celestial body emanates a resplendent azure radiance, akin to a precious gem suspended in the vast expanse of darkness.

The seven interconnected oceans that envelop it teem with intertwined life, where strength and weakness coexist harmoniously. Here, no malevolence taints the equilibrium that pervades. Nature, the embodiment of the golden ratio, orchestrates the intricate dance of all living beings, fostering competition, strife, and sustenance within the confines of established rules. Extinction is averted, as is wanton eradication. The balance remains undisturbed, and the eternal cycle perseveres, serenading the kaleidoscope of life's diversity.

The same principle extends to the terrestrial realm. This land, a colossal and indivisible continent, too is poised in equilibrium. Plants, avians, animals, and humanity alike adhere to the grand will that enshrouds and nurtures them. In essence, this planet thrives as a sentient entity.

It comprehends its purpose as ordained by celestial directives. There is nothing remarkable in this realization. Just as birds soar through the heavens and fish traverse the depths of the ocean, so too do celestial bodies possess an inherent vitality, performing their prescribed roles effortlessly, without the need for instruction or practice.

Even stars upon which conventional life cannot bloom, whether due to scorching or freezing temperatures, pulsate with life and adhere to their individual destinies.

Conversely, deceased stars relinquish their hues and distinctive attributes, reduced to mere ruins awaiting decomposition. Such colossal masses of stone can no longer lay claim to the title of stars in the truest sense. Hence, it would be no falsehood to declare that every planet is imbued with life. Indeed, it is common knowledge, and doubting it would be futile and simply foolish. For this universe is not demarcated by the dichotomy of life and death.

All are aware that all things commence and culminate within the dualism of good and evil. The fact that this planet has elected to be the cradle of abundant life is testament to its benevolent disposition. Solely **ashavans**, righteous beings, reside here, basking in the tender embrace of their maternal star's patronage. Among the intelligent lifeforms, humans predominate, yet this in no way gives rise to haughty tyranny. They acknowledge their role within the grand cycle and, therefore, refrain from igniting forests or polluting oceans, choosing instead to coexist harmoniously with the wildlife.

This, among other factors, accounts for the relatively modest advancement of civilization in this realm. Their concerns extend beyond their own prosperity; they possess the self-restraint to eschew transient desires. To act solely for personal gain would necessitate contravening the tenets of the **Avesta**, the sacred text, and sacrificing fellow living beings—kinship they refuse to forsake.

For the most part, they lead idyllic lives, toiling in sun-drenched fields and seeking solace within the confines of their homes when rain showers down. If one were to draw a parallel with a bygone era, it would resemble the Middle Ages. Such is the existence of **ashavans** throughout the world, where technologies and modes of thinking that could disrupt the natural order of things remain rare.

Their proliferation is hindered, for those capable of making great leaps in science or magic are scarce, and they seldom share their power with those lower in the hierarchy. For the servants of good cherish harmony and order.

For the servants of evil covet all for themselves. Hence, the mere existence of the latter poses a threat to the established order, while the former harness all available technologies

to combat evil. Ordinary citizens need not partake in this battle, granting the **drujvants**—a formidable advantage—the upper hand. The disparity in fundamental skills between the two factions is so immense that deploying technology to create soldiers lacking deep understanding of the **Avesta** would be futile.

Conversely, **drujvants** are few in number, and those capable of ascending to the status of **daevas** are even rarer. Thus, quantity aligns with good, while quality favors evil.

This structure holds true universally, evident even in the appearance of the respective cores of both sides. The Sacred Realm fields an army, while the forces of evil are represented by a mere seven malevolent kings. This illustrates the insignificance of the Annihilation Workshop and shows why this embodiment of evil instills such dread.

It embodies the zenith of quality while simultaneously amassing an unparalleled quantity, not to mention its ceaseless dispersal of creations across the world. Without hesitation, it bestows potent technologies upon **ashavans**, **drujvants**, **yazatas**, and **daevas**, indiscriminately sowing tragedy and devastation. Moreover, it embodies a cosmic catastrophe in its own right, capable of unraveling any semblance of order, plunging the universe into the abyss of chaos.

This is yet another reason why this planet, the epitome of righteousness, the sacred domain of Wahman Yasht, remains akin to the Middle Ages. It was vanquished by the Annihilation Star Cluster, despite the knowledge and technology that resided solely in the vanguard's arsenal. Now, they mourn the loss of their invaluable human resources.

The painstaking process of reclaiming the territory, even after two decades, proceeds at an almost glacial pace. Particularly when considering that this refuge, their new home, was originally uninhabited and situated a considerable distance from their previous abode. The former Sacred Realm was devoured by the Annihilation Workshop under the malevolent king's guidance. The star spirit Vohu Mana, with waning strength, managed to transport the survivors along, utilizing his final vestiges of power.

The Annihilation Workshop claims it "allowed" them to depart, but in reality, it was an ignominious flight. Severing ties with its vessel forever, Vohu Mana, at the last moment, evaded certain death by binding itself to an uninhabited planet, yet fell into a dormant slumber, now able to exert only a fraction of its former might.

Gradually, albeit steadily, he mends, and the Star Spirit's blessings already unveil new horizons for many **yazatas**. However, it remains undeniable that this is insufficient. Were he to seek retribution against the Annihilation Workshop in his present state, it would result in the complete annihilation of all, a single devastating blow. The last vestiges of goodness would forever fade into oblivion. Thus, all that remains is to flee...

Regardless of the sacrifices demanded, irrespective of the sorrow and animosity engulfing the cosmos—until a means to vanquish this ultimate malevolence is discovered, engaging in a battle against it would be the pinnacle of madness.

Now, the imperative lies in concealment. Not to perish valiantly on the battlefield, honor and pride aflame within, but to survive at any cost, even if it entails groveling in the dust. Patiently awaiting the opportune moment to strike back. This sentiment resonates among the majority of the holy kingdom's servants, and even their adversaries comprehend the rationale behind their convictions.

Few, if any, harbor hope for victory amidst the current circumstances. Perhaps that explains why... within the palace of heroes that once emanated hope and valor two decades ago, a stale darkness now takes hold.

As though in the midst of an assassins' or thieves' guild, feral sparks flicker in the eyes of the **yazatas** who seek respite within the castle's walls. Former honor and dignity slowly dissolve before our very eyes, while discovering the light becomes an increasingly arduous endeavor.

The Furious Blade embodies it all—blamed by some, praised by others—but if anything binds them together, it is weariness. Today, as on any other day, melancholy permeates the Sacred Realm. Even if glimpses of magnificence persist, they bear no joy. The heartfelt smiles that once abounded have long since vanished.



"Do you swear to offer your blood to the people, your flesh to a great goal, and your soul to the **Avesta**? Will you steadfastly maintain your prayers and serve as a beacon of righteousness?"

"I swear," came the solemn reply, echoing through the grand ceremonial hall within the heart of the royal castle.

Samluch, kneeling before the revered figure of His Most Holy Majesty Sirius, accepted the gleaming sword placed upon her left shoulder, her countenance humbled to an unimaginable degree. Her right arm and left leg adorned in sleek, black steel—prosthetic limbs tailored specifically for her—caused her no discomfort, their design meticulously minimizing any semblance of deformity.

To an outsider, it might have appeared as if she donned an intricate suit of armor. The functionality of these prostheses was equally remarkable. Her right knee and fist rested firmly upon the marble floor, while her left knee extended forward, a posture so flawless that it appeared entirely natural. Such precision indicated the nerve connections that extended to her very fingertips, enabling her to move them with unrestricted dexterity.

This technology, a rarity in the lost Sacred Realm, remained at its pinnacle. The loss of limbs in warfare was an all too familiar occurrence, and in the current state of affairs, every capable warrior was indispensable. Yet, Samluch stood above the rest. Her prosthetics concealed numerous combat capabilities, allowing her to engage in combat without relying solely on her sworn Oath. Within the Sacred Realm, those blessed with the potent gift of Haoma possessed the ability to regenerate lost limbs. However, Samluch had no need for such marvels. The moment her prosthetics were fitted, she was summoned to this ceremony, and together we journeyed here.

"We are the defenders of order, unwavering zealots without fear or reproach. We do not tolerate impotence and cowardice in the face of chaotic evil. Your strength shall be the sword that uplifts your powerless comrades, the shield that shields them from harm. Understand that henceforth, every action you take shall be in pursuit of victory. By this act, I etch this new **Commandment** upon your heart..."

Flanked by twelve noble lords, each overseeing a different region of the mainland, His Majesty stood at the center, his voice firm and resolute. Behind them stood around fifty yazats, united in purpose. Every lord present was a native of this planet, inheriting their lands through lineage. In essence, they did not falter twenty years ago; rather, they "awakened" after the Sacred Realm was transposed to this new realm. Such matters posed no issue for anyone. They were far from being the only newcomers who lacked knowledge of their side's past. The same could be said of the **yazatas** gathered here.

Of those who survived that fateful battle, only His Majesty Sirius remained. It was said that a mere thirty individuals managed to escape the grasp of their foe, and today, they could be counted on one hand. His Majesty Sirius, his venerable younger sister Nahid (who was absent from this gathering), and finally, Magsarion...

Each possessed their reasons, their memories veiled to my sight. Thus, like everyone else, my understanding of the events from two decades past came solely from hearsay. I had no right to speak with arrogance or assert authority over the lords. The fact that His Majesty entrusted them with governance showcased his pragmatism. Rather than constructing a new society from scratch upon foreign soil, it proved more practical to delegate such responsibilities to individuals like the lords. Everyone recognized the wisdom in this decision. The **ashavan** world was not built upon authority; this method of governance had been established long before the Sacred Realm's relocation.

Even in the face of disagreements, discussions persevered on the grounds of consensus. For us, this manner of conducting affairs was undoubtedly the most effective. Bypassing or undermining others would constitute an act of "unfaithfulness," a transgression that only the **drujvants** were capable of. It was the duty of the lords to safeguard the well-being and security of those within their domains. And it was the responsibility of His Most Holy Majesty to summon the **yazatas** and lead them into battle against the forces of evil.

Hence, although His Majesty bore the title of king, his role primarily revolved around military operations. While his authority as a ruler may have been limited, given the unwavering desire of all **ashavans** for triumph over the **drujvants**, it was undeniable that his position surpassed all others. Furthermore, he deserved the utmost respect. Those aspiring to become a holy king had to Commandment their loyalty to Vohu Mana. In essence, they required the determination and capability to undertake the weighty **Commandment** that accompanied the role—an entirely merit-based system that disregarded hereditary lineage.

Evidence of this lay in the fact that His Majesty himself was born the son of one of the lords. Now at the age of forty-eight, His Majesty could still be considered young for a king. Most of the lords were older than him. Yet, one would hardly deduce his age from his appearance alone.

His tall, sinewy frame exhibited no signs of aging—a testament to his past military exploits. However, numerous creases adorned his noble countenance, and his once-vibrant hair had faded with time. It was difficult to fathom that His Majesty Sirius stood in the prime of his life, not even fifty years old.

Nevertheless, his presence commanded attention and respect. Exuding power and dignity, his unwavering gaze emanated a willpower so potent that even the audacious Samluch could not meet it directly.

Few would genuinely consider him old. In simple terms, he had traversed a path far more arduous than any of us. Confronting hardships and despair beyond words, his entire history formed an indivisible whole—our current king.

Upon His Majesty's shoulders rested the lives and future of all **ashavans**—a responsibility that we, mere individuals, could hardly fathom.



I understand your concerns. It is natural to feel compassion for His Majesty Sirius and wonder about the burdens he carries. It seems that he is aware of the weight of his position but chooses to remain steadfast in his role as the king.

Perhaps he believes that a king should bear the burden alone, or he may simply struggle with loneliness. It is possible that he mourns deeply, fearing further losses and the consequences they may bring.

The ceremony concludes, and Samluch, now officially a **yazata**, receives thunderous applause. As she gazes at me with a slightly puzzled expression, she offers an apologetic smile, to which I respond in kind.

When I look around, I notice that His Majesty has already turned and is leaving, followed by the lords. His responsibilities must be numerous, so I should not perceive him as a cold person. Yet, my mind drifts back to the few days I spent in the Sacred Realm upon my return, prompting further reflection. I contemplate what His Majesty intends to do with Magsarion.

The **Yazaras** who accompanied me witnessed Magsarion's actions in the village of Reilly, and I reported everything truthfully, hiding nothing. His Majesty nodded in understanding, but his decision regarding Magsarion has not been made public.

There are several potential options being considered among yourselves.

The first option is the death penalty, where Magsarion would be deemed a traitor and executed for causing irreparable damage to the cause of good.

The second option is exile, where he would be pardoned for his military contributions but stripped of his title as a **yazata** and the gifts bestowed by the star spirit, leaving him to fend for himself.

The third option is arrest, as Magsarion is too valuable to be lost, but it is uncertain how he would react to being confined.

Personally, I lean towards the third option, but I acknowledge that it might be too naive. Magsarion is not the type to sit quietly under arrest. He is a dedicated individual who often sacrifices his own well-being to eliminate evil. It is likely that His Majesty also understands this, and both execution and exile would yield similar outcomes. The situation presents a dilemma.

I once again gaze at the back of His Majesty Sirius, knowing that speculating about a superior's thoughts without basis is a breach of command. His logic has become increasingly difficult to comprehend. If Magsarion's consciousness is a turbulent, murky stream, then His Majesty is a steel fortress. They appear to be exact opposites, yet both conceal their true selves. Perhaps the answers lie in the defeat suffered twenty years ago.

His Majesty and Magsarion remember what the **yazatas** who arrived later cannot even fathom. Their relationship may not be friendly, but it is not entirely hostile either. There seems to be an understanding or agreement between them, and it is possible that Magsarion is granted certain privileges because of it. However, can such a relationship truly be considered just?

Currently, it feels as though a cold war is unfolding, which goes against our way. His Majesty and Magsarion stand at the center, and their influence begins to extend to those around them. If the Sacred Realm were to be divided in the future, what should I do?

Needless to say, the mere thought of such a scenario brings an unbearable headache.

2

I find that looking at things with simplicity is a unique talent, although it proves to be unexpectedly challenging, especially for someone like me. As someone with the ability and mission to understand the thoughts and emotions of others, I am compelled to delve deeper into people's personalities, treating them as intricate equations.

In essence, people are like histories. Due to my respect for the diversity of opinions, I involuntarily consider various perspectives, sometimes even more than necessary. Yet, some may argue that I am wasting my time by doing so. I understand their point, but I cannot change my nature. There are moments when I envy those who can maintain a more straightforward outlook.

Like now. As we walk through the expansive corridors of the castle, Samluch speaks, her expression slightly surprised. Though her choice of words may not be the most polite, there is no mockery in her tone. Instead, it comes across as a form of praise.

"Is that how you show your respect for him? Do you believe that His Majesty is deserving of his position?"

"Don't exaggerate."

"I don't know what he's like in his personal life. It's difficult to assess someone's character and worthiness in such a short period. But..."

She pauses, looking at me before skillfully scratching the bridge of her nose with a newly installed prosthesis. Then she continues, her gaze somewhat distant.

"I understand that he carries his grief within him. And he sees that grief as his own. Well, why not? If there's someone like him at the top, it's unfair for us to complain. At least no one can say, 'Give it to me.'"

"So, you're saying that they obey him out of respect rather than admiration?" I inquire.

"Perhaps," Samluch responds.

"In general, everyone understands that it's not an easy role for him." Her nonchalant tone, despite the fact that she will undoubtedly cause much inconvenience to everyone in the future, brings a sad smile to my face.

Once again, I find myself contemplating. People like Samluch make me feel inadequate. His Majesty Sirius is a stern individual who does not allow himself to share his joys and sorrows with his vassals. This makes him less of a king admired by his subjects, someone they aspire to emulate. Instead, people respect his unyielding solitude and unwavering integrity. As Samluch would say, it is perhaps the most unenviable position, and no one desires to occupy it. Hence, she appreciates the fact that the position must be filled but is relieved that it is not her burden to bear.

How I envy such clarity.

Yet, I cannot help but think further.

While he is irreplaceable at the moment, will there come a time when the weight of shouldering everything alone begins to take its toll on him?

It is shameful to contemplate, but every person has their limit. His Majesty has walked this arduous path for twenty years now, and his limit draws nearer. Are the first signs already beginning to manifest?

For instance, his relationship with the lone individualist who shares his past... Could it be that the image of the king is starting to crack because of it?

"In that case, what are your predictions regarding Magsarion's punishment?" I cautiously inquire, still mindful of the recent incident that remains fresh in our minds.

I want to hear Samluch's opinion, as she possesses a simple perspective that I struggle to grasp. How will she judge this complex and delicate issue? How will someone like her comprehend it?

"Well... I doubt he will face public reprimand," Samluch replies, wincing slightly.

"Talk of crimes and punishments does not apply to him. Maybe he even considers it unnecessary. Only time will tell." I agree with her on this point.

I cannot envision Magsarion sitting quietly in a cell, and from his perspective, it likely appears as nothing more than unnecessary trouble. However, it seems Samluch does not stop there.

"You mentioned 'publicly.' What about behind closed doors?" I inquire.

"It's too complicated. If we make it overly convoluted, some might question His Majesty's policies, and we don't need that. On the other hand, letting Magsarion go unpunished is not an option either. If it seems too much like corruption, our obedient subjects will start to worry," Samluch explains.

"Are you talking about me?" I ask.

"Who knows," she responds.

"The main thing is that everyone agrees with the decision. It should be mutually beneficial, including for the idiot Magsarion. So, there is only one option." Samluch continues, her tone bored and devoid of hidden meaning, as if she herself is uninterested.

"Throw him into the thick of it... That will satisfy everyone. It's what Magsarion needs, and regardless of the outcome, it will turn out well. Whether you hate him or not... Don't you, Quinn?"

"It's true," I admit.

In other words, if not with punishment, then with an opportunity... Indeed, if there is a way to utilize a furious blade that lacks loyalty or gratitude, it is best to provide it with a battleground. Upon reflection, it seems that he has been released into such situations before. And now, this approach will become even more apparent and stringent. If he is sent to the most dangerous frontlines, it will satisfy those who criticize Magsarion, and on the other hand, it can be interpreted as a sign of trust based on his military achievements.

Ultimately, everyone understands that, given the current circumstances, His Majesty will not recklessly deplete his resources. If we consider that Magsarion will be ordered to the frontline precisely because he is capable of delivering results, then the decision is indeed fair, even if some minor details need to be resolved. I am confident that Samluch's prediction will prove correct, and her words will find agreement among many. The only question that remains is regarding His Majesty Sirius' true intentions...

"What do you think? How does His Majesty feel about Magsarion?" I ask. "Does he desire his death?"

Slightly taken aback, Samluch quickly shakes her head.

"I can't say for sure. But I believe he wants Magsarion to survive. If he were to die too easily, it would not serve as proper retribution for the little one and the others. I told you, he must live until it's all over, and that's where I'll settle the score with him."

"Yes... you're right. Please accept my apologies," I say, humbled by her response.

Samluch's gaze remains steadfast, reflecting her unwavering determination. Her straightforwardness, though virtuous and just, also fills me with a sense of unease. The phrase "when it's all over" implies the defeat of evil and the promise of peace. However, the decision to end the battle with Magsarion seems contradictory to this notion. It's as if, after collecting garbage, we decided to eliminate the filthiest of all, but in doing so, we stain ourselves.

To wash blood with blood would only perpetuate an endless cycle of violence. It raises the question of whether such actions can truly be considered good.

"I understand what you mean, Quinn. It seems strange to me as well. So..." Suddenly, she pushes me with her shoulder, the weight of her crude combat prosthesis causing me to recoil. But Samluch pulls me closer, breaking into a smirk.

"Let all the difficulties, without exception, remain on the conscience of His Majesty. That's probably what he desires himself. It's enough for small fry like us to toil away and not dwell on it. Isn't that what the **Avesta** tells us...right?"

"Honestly... What kind of person are you?" Ultimately, it seems that regardless of how much I contemplate, I can only arrive at the same conclusion as Samluch.

There's no point in wasting time on these thoughts. If that's the case, then I should at least look towards the future with optimism, as befits a **yazata**. I cannot change my inherent nature, but dwelling on gloomy thoughts will get me nowhere, and miracles won't gather themselves.

"It's true. I'll try to relax a little."

"Yeah, that's the spirit. And hey, I have an order for you. Since I've arrived here, I've only been in barracks and workshops. Show me what's here."

"Consider it done. Let's start by taking a look at this sculpture. It's made in the Amesha Spenta style, and the artist's profound grief caused quite a sensation in the art world. Sir Tulan, the Lord of the Amu Darya, personally commissioned it..."

"But who cares! Are you doing this on purpose?"

"How crude. I'm simply diligently fulfilling your request."

She pokes me on the head with her finger, and I respond in a slightly offended manner. Samluch responds in kind, and our playful banter echoes throughout the castle. In a way, it's not so bad. And so, I begin the tour, but Samluch quickly loses interest. I can understand her sentiment.

This is a royal castle, the heart of a Sacred Realm, yet it lacks the refined elegance of a palace and the sublime atmosphere one would expect. There are no entertainments here that would captivate Samluch's interest. Personally, I can appreciate the effective design and existing decor or furniture, but I don't expect her to share my enthusiasm for such hobbies. As a result, I simply show her what is where. Even excluding the areas reserved for His Majesty and the lords, the castle is vast, and inspecting each room would take several days.

I need to provide a specific focus and avoid aimless wandering. If I receive clear instructions, I can expedite our tour. However...

"Listen, is there anything more interesting here?"

It's clear that my client desires something more concrete, and I find myself at a loss. How can I please someone whose idea of interesting things differs so greatly from mine? Even if I were to read her thoughts, it wouldn't help, as she longs for things like coliseums and hippodromes—gambling-related activities that simply do not exist here. Perhaps I could take her to the kitchen, but that would be too risky. If Samluch suddenly develops an appetite for the royal banquet, it would be my fault. I need to change my strategy. If I have nothing to entertain her with directly, I must pique her interest in another way—perhaps through new information.

"Understood. I have an idea."

"Oh, look how confident you suddenly are. Why couldn't you have thought of it earlier?"

She playfully nudges me with her elbow, but alas, it's not what she imagines. In reality, she will have to endure another lecture. However, I believe it should be quite fascinating for any **yazata**, and it's knowledge they should possess. So, I can't be faulted for withholding information. Besides, I don't feel guilty about it.

"Come on, follow me." I call out to Samluch, who nods enthusiastically, and we head toward the designated place.

"Oh, where are we going? You're really trying to surprise me!"

"Don't shout, the echo is already loud. And if you need light, it's right there."

She might not be able to see where I'm pointing, but there's a faint blue light in the direction I indicate. Samluch seems to have noticed it as well and follows, albeit with some skepticism.

"What is this place? Is that the center of the room? It's so vast... What is it?"

"You'll find out soon enough. Just follow me. Don't worry, there's nothing here to trip over."

I start walking, feeling Samluch slightly behind me. Our footsteps reverberate through the darkness, creating a whimsical melody. The blue light we're heading toward seems to remain distant, as if we're not making any progress at all. As Samluch mentioned, this room is spacious, and there's no doubt it's the largest in the entire Sacred Realm. The reason will become clear soon enough. The hall's size isn't a mere whim or an attempt to shock—it's a purposeful design choice.

"Samluch, what is the ultimate goal that unites us and the **daevas**?"

"Hmm? That's easy. It's to destroy the enemy core."

"Exactly. They seek to destroy this Sacred Realm, while we aim to vanquish the seven Kings of Evil."

As we continue walking, I decide to engage in conversation, as there is still some time before we reach our destination. This isn't idle chatter, though. Before delving into a full lecture, there are a few things I need to clarify.

"However, according to the **Avesta**, they must be eliminated swiftly. From what we know based on past instances, a successor is born within a year, and if none emerges, the dormant one awakens."

"After all, the Sacred Realm has managed to endure for twenty years."

"Even though we're still far from our golden age. Regardless, incomplete destruction would only lead us in circles. Over these twenty years, the composition of the Kings of Evil has continued to change."

"Is that so?" she nods in response, even though it's shrouded in darkness.

It's understandable that Samluch is unaware of the power struggle among the King of Evils. After all, I myself only learned about it three years ago, and it was a surprising revelation. The great battle that took place before our time ended in a resounding victory for the forces of good. However, in the long run, one could argue that it was a draw.

"In all of history, only three kings of evil have been slain by the **yazatas**. And all three were defeated twenty years ago by a single courageous man."

I can hear Samluch swallow softly behind me. Although she never had the chance to witness my father's threat firsthand, after numerous battles with the **Druvants**, she can surely imagine the power possessed by a King of Evil. But once, there was someone who vanquished three of them, singlehandedly. Tales of his heroics make the heart of every **yazata** race, and they speak of him as a miraculous hero.

"His name was Varhran... He was a close friend of His Majesty Sirius and the elder brother of Magsarion."

"Yes..."

In her voice, a complex mixture of amazement, admiration, and sadness resonated. Samluch had figured it out, at least partially. She couldn't help but feel a pang of sorrow and unease when thoughts of Varhran crossed her mind, knowing that his father had taken his life, erasing the joy from Magsarion's face and forever altering him.

Although no one expected her to atone for her father's actions, Quinn couldn't ignore the truth.

"Quinn, are you okay?" Samluch's concerned voice broke through her thoughts.

"Yes... Please accept my apologies. It's a painful subject, but we didn't come here for that. Let's change the topic," I replied, her voice tinged with a hint of sadness.

Finally, we reached the center of the hall. Illuminating the space was a sphere, placed delicately on a pedestal. Its size was akin to that of a human head, radiating a subtle, ethereal blue light. The sphere rotated slowly, casting a refined and mysterious glow amidst the silence and darkness. We could see intricate details of the planet's landmasses, oceans, and even the ongoing weather patterns. It was evident what the sphere was meant to depict.

"This is the Sacred Realm, the planet we are on. Take a look."

As my hand approached the sphere, its luminescence diverged in all directions, dispelling the darkness and creating a breathtaking display in the air. A mandala-like pattern materialized under the vast dome, pulsating with flashing dots representing stars. The collective consciousness of the entire universe seemed to reside within this mesmerizing map, a testament to its complexity.

The sphere functioned as an intricate planetarium, accurately calculating the location of celestial bodies and their distances from the Sacred Realm. Thanks to the clairvoyance of the stellar spirit Vohu Mana, gifted with the ability to see thousands of light years away, the sphere provided a means to observe the state of affairs throughout the universe. While they couldn't keep track of every minute detail, it offered them a way to remain vigilant against their most formidable adversaries.

I noticed a set of letters and numbers beside certain stars, and my gaze focused on seven particularly suspicious lights. Connected lines provided information about the true nature of despicable evil.

"These are the current locations of the Kings of Evil. Detailed descriptions are provided here, and I will read them out to you. Make sure to remember all of it," I instructed Samluch.

I point to a prominent yellow light and began, "Annihilation Star Cluster of Saurva is the first King of Evil, Khvarenah. My father and the destroyer of the brave, the Annihilation Workshop is the greatest adversary in the Sacred Realm."

"The Singularity of Angra Mainyu is the second King of Evil, Nadare."

"Locust of Ferocity Aeshma is the third King of Evil, Bahlavan."

"Garden of Bloodshed Baliga is the fourth King of Evil, Frederica."

"Sky Burial Sphere Druj Nasu is the fifth King of Evil, Mashyana."

"Star of the Dragon's Remains Zahhak is the sixth King of Evil, Kaikhosru."

"Wing of Malice is the seventh King of Evil, Aka Manah."

As I continued, I could sense Samluch etching the names in her heart, absorbing the information about the remaining six kings and their respective locations. Each one was far from the Sacred Realm, separated by vast distances of thousands and tens of thousands of light years. However, their ability to teleport, just like the **ashavans**, meant that their current position couldn't be considered entirely secure. Vigilance was paramount, especially against the creations of father.

"The fourth, fifth, and seventh places were recently filled, effectively filling the gap left by Varhran... and that annoys me even more,."

"And how are these kings assigned numbers? Is it based on their strength?" Samluch inquired, trying to grasp the hierarchy.

"In truth, the numbers represent the potential danger they pose to us, but it's not solely determined by strength. It's possible that the kings themselves have a different hierarchy or none at all," I explained.

"However, it's safe to say that the first, second, and third kings are on an entirely different level from the rest. They have caused the deaths of countless stars and have held their positions as the kings of evil for over a thousand years."

"Thousands of years?! How can they live for so long?" Samluch exclaimed, astonished by their longevity. I gestured towards myself, ready with an answer I had anticipated.

"Take me, for example. I am not human. Their concept of life expectancy may differ from yours, and if it's merely measured in years, it's likely they can live for quite a long time."

"But their long lifespan might not be solely attributed to their non-human nature"

"It's probable that their physical resilience, like that of my father and me, differs from that of humans. However, physical strength alone cannot compare to the strength of one's spirit. Can I still be considered Quinn under the weight of endless time? If my heart ceases to exist, will my body's functions suffice?" I paused, contemplating the concept further.

"To transcend these limitations, one requires a metaphysical force—a soul, if you will. It's the strength of mind that surpasses the laws of physics." Samluch listened attentively, her eyes reflecting a glimmer of understanding.

My words resonated with her, and she spoke, "So, it's about spiritualism. Believing in oneself and possessing the strength of mind to defy logic."

"It's never superfluous, especially for individuals like you," I replied, acknowledging the importance of self-belief.

Samluch's dissatisfaction with my answer was evident, but I had no intention of offending her. My words aligned with the perspective of the king, lending some credibility to this "theory" that may not seem entirely baseless. The highest-ranking Kings of Evil endure through sheer force of will. Our longevity may be limited, but it doesn't mean our will is weak.

The desire to transcend the natural order, the thirst for eternity, is a wicked act that disrupts the balance. That's why we, as **ashavans**, cherish our short lives, believing that in their fleeting moments, we can shine brightly. In essence, our approaches differ. Our faith is not measured in longevity or brute strength. Instead, we gather prayers called virtues or love to manifest miracles.

"Regardless, we must not lose hope. Perhaps you possess more knowledge than I do in this regard, but keep this in mind," I stated.

"Of course," Samluch replied.

"Do we know their vulnerabilities?"

"Unfortunately, no... However, we know their personalities, and I'll share that with you now. I believe we can skip discussing my father."

I pointed to the location of the second King of Evil, but it was no longer where it had been before. It kept moving, jumping from place to place with dizzying speed, never intending to settle anywhere. It was as if she was constantly being expelled from the cosmic stage, only to return each time. This erratic pattern of appearances and disappearances spoke volumes about her detachment from the world.

That's why she's called the Singularity—an extraordinary being existing by her own rules.

"As you can see, Nadare's movements defy common sense, making it extremely difficult to pinpoint her exact location. It is believed that the Kings of Evil sometimes gather at her call, but none of us knows what their realm is like," I explained.

"So, she's like the headquarters for these dimwits... Wait, Nadare is a woman?" Samluch questioned.

"We can only judge by her appearance, but the archives describe her as having the form of a young girl. In reality, she is the oldest among the Kings of Evil... By the time the Sacred Realm began keeping records, she had already proclaimed herself the embodiment of absolute evil, so it's uncertain how long she has lived," I clarified.

"So, she's been wreaking havoc even longer than your father? And why is she only in second place?" Samluch inquired.

"Perhaps Nadare's activity is cyclical, as she hasn't been active in the past few hundred years. Consequently, she dropped a rank, but we shouldn't underestimate her as weak," I responded.

Despite her absence for centuries, she still ranked second in terms of danger. This indicated her formidable power when she unleashed her full might, and historical records provided evidence of that.

True to her name, Nadare "destroys" the world. It's a terrifying thought, but her monstrosity may rival or even surpass that of her father.

"And what about the third king? I assume he's equally formidable," Samluch pressed.

"Bahlavan differs somewhat from father and Nadare. How should I put it... He's not a destroyer but a warrior," I explained.

The first and second Kings of Evil can be likened to natural disasters, not precisely targeting anything, but causing widespread destruction. Their perspectives and scope transcend human understanding. However, Bahlavan is different. His perspective is human, yet the outcome of his actions is no different from that of father and Nadare.

"As for the third King of Evil, we even know his **Commandment**. He is 'obliged to fight at full strength with everyone he meets'..." I revealed.

"What?..." Samluch reacted, taken aback.

The simplicity and clarity of the statement surprised her, almost appearing childlike. But the truth was that this enemy was so formidable that no other description would suffice.

"It doesn't matter how prepared his opponents are for the fight or whether they are capable at all. He shows no mercy, be it women, the elderly, plants, insects, **ashavans**, or **drujvants**. The only condition is a meeting with him and the mutual awareness of that fact."

"So, it's like a signal sounds, and then... You're not suggesting..." Samluch's voice trailed off, apprehension filling the air.

"It can only end in a massacre. That's the ongoing legacy of the third King of Evil."

One by one, person after person, blade of grass after blade of grass, he confronts them all. With unwavering determination, he gazes into their eyes, listens to their dying cries, spills their blood, and takes their lives. Each encounter is marked by his unrelenting force. As he traverses the land, nothing is left in his wake. He annihilates Star Spirits and transforms planets into desolate wastelands, only to move on to the next star and repeat the cycle.

In essence, he scrutinizes every corner, much like father, although the disparity between them isn't substantial. Bahlavan's obsession with combat is unparalleled. The pursuit of becoming the "strongest" is a coveted ideal among warriors. And in his twisted pursuit, Bahlavan adopted a method that can only be described as a cruel joke. His approach: to fight and conquer everything in the world. The last one standing shall claim the title of the strongest.

"I doubt there's anyone whose battle experience surpasses Bahlavan's, both in quantity and quality. Furthermore, he's been responsible for the majority of the King of Evil's replacements since his birth."

"Does that mean he's ready to fight your father or Nadare? And if they're still alive, does it imply they've taken a break?" she ponders.

"Most likely... Perhaps their conflict persists even now. We have limited knowledge on this matter, so all we can do is speculate," I answer.

"In essence, he's a rabid dog, isn't he? Not unlike Magsarion after the Fall," Samluch adds. I remain silent in response to Samluch's words, but deep down, I begrudgingly agree.

There is indeed a certain resemblance between them. The disregard for the boundaries between allies and enemies, their solitary journey through life, and the inevitable devastation they leave in their wake.

"This is the final one among the three that I previously mentioned as being noteworthy. However, we mustn't underestimate the other four," I interject, realizing that Samluch's attention may wane during her lengthy lecture. Wanting to provide a concise overview of the remaining King of Evils, I continue.

"The fourth King of Evil, Frederica, is a ruthless killer. Her interest lies primarily in humans, but her rank speaks volumes about her dangerous nature despite her youth. She also commands a group of powerful and infamous subordinates. The fifth King of Evil, Mashyana, can also be considered young. After Varhran's demise, many representatives of good and evil emerged within her system, and for a time, she became the greatest battlefield. Her victory in that snake's den was no mere coincidence. Unlike the others, the sixth King of Evil, Kaikhosru, treads a different path. He is a tyrant who mercilessly exploits people. Although his kill count may be relatively low, his track record of vicious deeds and his prolonged tenure indicate that he possesses significant strength. Finally, the last one remains—the seventh King of Evil..." I pause, pointing towards the center of the planetarium, situated almost directly above the sphere symbolizing the Sacred Realm.

"You mean this one?" Samluch inquires.

"Yes, precisely. The Wings of Malice, as you called it," she mutters, clearly dissatisfied with the name.

"Why is it only translucent?"

I comprehend her skepticism and share the same question that plagued me when I first arrived here. Even after three years, my response remains the same as it was back then.

"We do not know. The seventh King of Evil shows no signs of activity."

"But he exists, doesn't he?" Samluch presses.

"Based on the Star Spirit's intuition, I believe there can be no mistake..." I trail off, the last part of my sentence lacking conviction.

As Samluch pointed out, information about the final King of Evil is scarce and enigmatic, rendering him akin to a ghost or mirage. No one has laid eyes on him, and there is no evidence of his actions.

How should we interpret this fact?

Should we rejoice in the absence of victims, or should we feel ashamed for our inability to gather meaningful information about him?

The seventh King of Evil, Aka Manah, exudes an aura of repulsion and sinister darkness, shrouded in an unidentified veil.

"Well... Since we have no information about him, there's nothing we can do about it. So far, I believe I've covered everything you need to know."

"Understood. Then, if you'll excuse me, I have a question," Samluch interjects.

I wait for her query, and she gazes up at the planetarium, her brows furrowing in contemplation.

"I've come to realize the unimaginable might of our enemies, especially considering your folder. So, we primarily adopt a defensive stance and avoid unnecessary risks. I understand and won't complain about it."

She accepts that this battle isn't fought solely by the **yazatas**; the fate of all **ashavans** rests upon our success. Although she may dislike our defensive approach, she won't recklessly engage in a fight she cannot win. While she may come off as brash and impulsive, one cannot label her as irresponsible.

"But how long must we wait? What will be the signal for a counterattack? Defense alone won't achieve anything. We'll simply be starved out," Samluch ponders.

"Indeed, I understand your point."

Ultimately, our endurance is aimed at securing victory. While she acknowledges the need for patience, she naturally desires to comprehend the conditions for our counteroffensive.

"First, we need numbers. Second, we require Varhran's successor. At the very least, we must restore our strength to the level of the golden age.

"But we still lost twenty years ago," Samluch remarks.

"Yes... And that's precisely why we need the 'x' factor. Specifically, the work of my father, which could become our trump card," I reveal.

Samluch falls silent abruptly, and a sense of unease washes over me. She appears surprised by this revelation, which is understandable. In essence, we are placing our hope in external assistance.

My father, without a second thought, scatters his progeny, seemingly unperturbed by the potential risks to his own life. In theory, it's possible. The King of Evil can only be vanquished by the power of another King of Evil. It's logical to assume that the Master of Annihilation, deemed invincible, would be defeated by his own offspring. We deem this plan to be the most reliable, hence our anticipation for the emergence of the greatest evil blade in the world to wield it as a sacred sword.

Setting aside excuses, this is our current objective, and anyone who claims we should feel ashamed is entirely correct—I won't argue with them.

However...

"So that's it. It seems we've already fulfilled this condition," Samluch suddenly states.

"Sorry?" I reply, bewildered.

Samluch herself appears astonished by her own statement, leaving me equally dumbfounded. What is she referring to?

"No, well... hold on, please," I stammer.

She shouldn't state it so matter-of-factly. It's true that I am my father's daughter, tasked with defeating him and currently working towards that end. I have nothing to deny in that regard, and I won't downplay my role. However, this plan is still far from fruition, and it's premature to speak of restoring its former glory.

"In the end, we still lack a replacement for Varhran..."

"You have me. Don't worry, I'll make good use of you," Samluch replies with a smile, indicating that she considers the matter settled.

What can I do?

It appears that no matter what I say, Samluch will simply brush it off with a confident smile.

I'm starting to feel a tinge of fear towards her.

3

Don't misunderstand me—I am far from lacking in self-confidence.

Though our hero was slain by my father, I came into existence precisely because Varhran struck fear into him.

His plan was to consume me upon discovering my existence, attaining even greater perfection. As his daughter and a **yazata**, it is my ultimate purpose to vanquish the King of Evil, the Workshop of Annihilation. This is the essence of my life, and I possess unwavering certainty and courage in this pursuit. However, I cannot envision myself as a pivotal entity.

I am merely an individual, a weapon that will become part of a magnificent blade, the ultimate "phenomenon" brought about by benevolent prayers. To claim that everything will be well with me is baseless. The same applies to my kin, whose birth we anticipate. The crucial aspect is to gradually gather the hopes of victory, piece by piece, and seek out the most effective path.

"That being said, we cannot expect an immediate transformation of our circumstances. No matter how fervently we desire to reverse them, a quick fix eludes us. Are you listening, Samluch?"

"In short, do we still require a miraculous power boost?"

"It's simple. As long as you are by my side, we will swiftly acquire it."

"You should abandon your inclination to perceive matters simplistically, regardless of the circumstances."

"Is that so? Many have expressed envy for such an approach. I assume you don't share that sentiment?"

"Indeed."

I believe it would be unwise to follow Samluch's example. Although I may have pondered it before, it was surely a momentary lapse of reason. We have departed from the planetarium and are now engaged in a heated argument—though it is mainly me taking the conversation seriously, presenting my reasoning as we traverse the corridor. I am convinced that Samluch cannot genuinely be that optimistic, and if I have the opportunity to caution her, I should seize it.

"Nevertheless, even if we focus solely on my father, we are far from prepared to confront him. We must devise a method to effectively utilize 'all our prayers,' which I have observed thus far and will continue to gather in the future."

"Your father believed it all came down to numbers, but our elders did not concur two decades ago, did they? Hence, we must seek an alternative approach to quantify them..."

"Yes, and I believe Mr. Varhran understood this. The answer he discovered, through his heroic deeds, undoubtedly unsettled his father."

And so, this equation holds the key. Without solving it, victory will elude us. Ordinary arithmetic, combining hope and subtracting despair, cannot surpass the First King of Evil. Even the sacred kingdom of yesteryears, far more formidable than the current one, was defeated. Moreover, if we have diminished since then, the challenge is greater. "In our father's words, it requires a supernatural factor... We must uncover a method that defies common sense. Undoubtedly, this is what is known as a miracle.

"Hence, one could consider that we are now in the phase of increasing our odds. In other words, we must gather an array of diverse weapons, ensuring that when we devise a strategy, we possess everything necessary for it."

"And so, are we preoccupied with trivial matters? It feels monotonous, and it seems like we are merely chasing quantity."

"That perception is mistaken."

While I admit there is little fascination in this approach, should we not consider that a foundation based on quality will yield results? My head starts spinning as I speak with Samluch.

"The equation that frightened our father signifies... It is unfortunate that we have no inkling of what Varhran had in mind when he refused to admit defeat. Perhaps we should consult His Majesty?"

"...Unfortunately, His Majesty Sirius has no insights to offer. Only that Mr. Varhran was exceptional."

"He himself is unaware. How utterly useless he is." Samluch emits a disgruntled sigh, brimming with insolence.

Yet, at least it appears she now shares Varhran's former perspective. This is not a predicament with an immediate resolution. Initially, **ashavans** always rely on numbers as they lack individual prowess. Thus, our current predicament, where arithmetic should favor us but fails to provide an answer, has plunged us into confusion. It seems that, be it our father or Varhran, leaders are always "different."

I feel inadequate for failing to grasp the complete truth and, in a way, sympathize with Samluch's eagerness for swift answers. However, for now, all we can do is our best.

"I appreciate your concern, but we cannot neglect our father's creations. We must search for and collect them, ensuring that incidents like the one in the village of Reilly do not recur."

"Understood. Moreover, a valuable discovery would indeed be a significant achievement. The task may be mundane, but if victory could be achieved through honor alone, we would have triumphed long ago. Let us attempt to inquire about Varhran's enigma from everyone we encounter."

"Samluch... If you wish to hear others' opinions, I do so all the time. Or have you forgotten?"

While she possesses a certain talent for communication, she selectively chooses her conversational partners. Her memory and common sense raise doubts, so relying on her too heavily would be unwise. Samluch exudes confidence, completely indifferent to my perspective. It is a delicate matter, and I must prevent her from brazenly questioning every individual she meets. What should I do?

"Hey, you there!" I anxiously step forward as Samluch suddenly shouts at someone

I survey my surroundings fearfully and notice she is addressing a man emerging from a nearby room.

"Ah, that's Fer."

"Hmm? Do you know him?"

"Yes, we have worked together."

At Samluch's call, a slender, short young man of fourteen or fifteen turns around. He could easily be mistaken for a young girl, but he remains a full-fledged **yazata**.

Fer, or Ferdows, squints up at me. To him, this is an ordinary occurrence, and our relationship is not particularly cordial.

"Quinn... What do you want? Did you need something?"

"No, I didn't call you, Samluch did."



"Ah... The new one, right?" Fer chuckles and sneers at Samluch, his smug grin on full display.

"You shouldn't associate with her. Are you not repulsed by her yourself? She's always in her head."

"What's wrong with this kid?"

My fears have materialized, and I look up hopelessly. Why is it that Samluch consistently encounters those who cannot get along with her? Surely, the issue lies in her approach to communication.

"Listen here, kid. I don't know if you're Quinn's classmate or what, but we're not on good terms anymore. Keep talking, and you'll regret it."

"Oh, so not only do you look like a fool, but you truly are one? You find it so easy to be comfortable even in her presence? How fortunate for you."

"Hey!..."

"Samluch, didn't you want to ask him something?"

Since I cannot intervene unless asked to do so, I can only attempt to steer the conversation back on track. However, Samluch shakes her head angrily.

"Forget it. We won't learn anything valuable from him. Let's go, Quinn."

"Wait, I assume you're interested in this? Very well, I'll show you."

"What?"

Ignoring Samluch's suspicious gaze, Fer defiantly rolls up his right sleeve and extends his bare forearm.

"Isn't it impressive? I stand on a different level than you."

"...Wait, what are you talking about? Are you trying to show off your scrawny arms?"

"Yes, and what does size have to do with it! Look here, look!" Fer leans forward with a touch of offense, bringing his hand closer.

A wing-shaped mark is visible on his smooth, fair skin—the insignia of a **yazata**, the Star Spirit Feathers. Noticeably, there are seven of them. Two more were added after his recent assignment. In other words, Fer has ascended beyond my level.

"Ah... I see."

"W... What indifference!"

"Excuse me..."

Fer and I entered service together, so we usually have the same number of feathers. We both started with three, then he was the first to reach four, and I was the first to reach five. But now, it seems Fer has jumped to seven feathers. I genuinely feel happy for his achievement and admire his diligence.

"But now I have seven feathers too."

"And they gave me seven right away."

"What?!" Fer screams in anger, his voice reaching its peak.

He stomps his foot in frustration, lamenting that it must be a lie and refusing to believe us.

"I'm not lying. And I haven't been ordered to lie."

"Show him, Quinn."

"What?!"

Before I can fully comprehend the command, I lift my skirt with my own hand, revealing the mark on my inner thigh. Fer's angry cries turn into startled squeals.

"I can show you too. Here."

Samluch exposes her breasts, showing him the seal under her right nipple. Fer writhes on the floor, his face bright red. He's a naive person in many ways, and it's difficult to find common ground with him. But there's a certain charm to his genuine reactions, even though they often come back to haunt him like a boomerang. It may be sad or endearing, but there's no hidden agenda, and it inspires a certain level of trust.

I didn't expect to be labeled a pervert, but I hope he understands that I had no other choice after receiving the order. Such shameless displays have caused me serious embarrassment before due to involuntary actions. So, let's consider this encounter a draw. He'll probably be angry if I mention it, but at least he only saw the not-so-brave side of me simultaneously.

"Damn it, fine, get out. Unlike you, I have important work to do." Fer grumbles to himself, unable to contain his annoyance, as he rises to his feet. But he seems to recall something and sports a self-satisfied smirk once again.

"I have a very, very important task ahead of me. Something you would never be entrusted with. Interested, Quinn?"

"Well, yes... I would appreciate if you could tell us."

Since he posed a question, I can't help but answer. I nod and wait for him to continue. Fer proceeds to explain with a triumphant air.

"I've been ordered to go to Lady Nahid. Being assigned to look after her is a clear sign of His Majesty's trust in me."

"And who is she?" Samluch appears confused, while it dawns on me.

She still has much to learn to avoid her naive deductions. I glance silently at Samluch, and she smirks mischievously. I'm not sure about her intentions, but it seems she's figured out how to handle me.

"Quinn, take me there as well."

"Consider it done."

Lady Nahid is His Majesty Svirios' younger sister and Varhran's former fiancée. It's indeed a great honor for Fer to be assigned to her care, and despite his attempts to dissuade us from following, it's clear that appearances can be deceiving. Samluch's order holds higher priority.

"His Majesty believes Lady Nahid was meant to be the Holy Queen from the beginning."

With an air of confidence, Fer lectures us incessantly along the way. Samluch doesn't seem thrilled about it, but it's easier for me to bear.

"A **yazata** leader must possess the ability to communicate with Vohu Mana. In this regard, His Majesty is suitable, but Lady Nahid surpasses him by far. It's said she has won the hearts of over two thousand star spirits and brought them under her command. Do you understand what that means?"

"Well... That she's incredibly powerful?"

"No. It means she wields an unmatched power."

Samluch remains skeptical of Fer's fervor, but I clearly grasp his message. Even one dormant Vohu Mana grants immense power. Based on that, it's not difficult to imagine the sheer magnitude of Lady Nahid's capabilities. To subjugate over two thousand star spirits and fully unleash their power... Even as our comrade-in-arms, she commands awe. Fer's statement that she's second to none is not an exaggeration; she undoubtedly reigns at the pinnacle of the summoner hierarchy.

Star Princess Nahid, an unparalleled figure who stood by Varhran, undoubtedly deserves her legendary status.

"We place our trust in numbers and unity, recognizing that a single **yazata** is inferior to a **daeva**. Painful as it may be to admit, this truth holds, but there are exceptions. Always at Varhran's side, the slayer of three kings of evil, was the unwavering support of Nahid. Together, their power was unimaginable—a beacon of hope and goodness, irreplaceable in its essence."

"But they still met with defeat, didn't they?"

Fer gazes sternly at the tactless Samluch, unable to object. After all, she spoke the truth, without any malicious intent. Fer chuckles angrily, carrying on with the tale.

"They loved each other with all their hearts. Regardless of the circumstances, their destinies were intertwined, bound by a Commandment to support one another. They were always at the forefront, symbols of hope that inspired their comrades-in-arms and lifted their spirits..."

"And that's why His Majesty ascended the royal throne?"

"Indeed. Nahid belonged to Varhran in the truest sense, filled with love for him alone. Recognizing this, His Majesty, in his wisdom, deemed it his duty to bear the weighty burden of kingship. In essence, he wished happiness for his sister and true friend, granting them as much freedom as he could. Grateful for his mercy, both Varhran and Naheed Commandmentd unwavering loyalty to him. While people speak of two great heroes, I believe there were three. Varhran, Naheed, and His Majesty Sirius—a trio whose combined radiance was made possible by the king's presence. You may describe it as a 'passion for learning.' Since we were not present at that decisive battle, it is our duty to learn the full truth about our predecessors and pass it on to future generations."

Fer disappointingly chides Samluch, and I find myself in agreement. Human life is transient, but history can endure for eternity. It is the responsibility of our generation, following in the footsteps of our predecessors, to ensure their tale is not forgotten.

"How about you, Samluch? You don't seem particularly interested, but such an attitude doesn't befit you. We owe our very lives to Varhran and Nahid. Despite their defeat, we emerged from the Workshop of Annihilation alive because they poured their strength into it."

"Is that true, Quinn?"

"Yes, everything Fer said is true."

"My father claimed to have 'let them go,' but that decision was made possible by the heroes' valiant resistance. Without this simple fact, I would not exist, and the Sacred Realm would have surely faced utter destruction. All **ashavans** would have perished, leaving no room for the likes of me, Samluch, or Fer. Without a doubt, we are indebted to them. Please, at the very least, acknowledge that."

"That's... It's not that I mock them myself; I simply don't know how to comport myself in somber situations. I'm not malicious, I apologize, Fer."

"Hey, stop fussing over me! I detest overbearing women."

"Don't be shy. In a man, it is the heart that matters most. Behave accordingly."

Jokingly, Samluch laughs at Fer, who resolutely resists her, despite her towering stature.

"And then the noble heroes from the other world will laugh at you. Are we going to their graves?"

"What?"

Fer's disbelief is palpable. It appears that Samluch has misunderstood something.

"Oh, no, right? I just thought that's what we were doing."

Yet, her mistake is not entirely unfounded. From Fer's account, one could assume that he was tasked with tending to graves. We find ourselves at a loss for words.

"Nahid-sama is in good health. However, explaining her current situation is rather difficult."

"Stop, Quinn. No matter how much you explain, she won't understand. It's easier to show her."

Fer and I exchange nods, leaving Samluch to her speculations. We have little time remaining, and witnessing everything firsthand surpasses any account we could provide.

"We're here, newbie. Lady Nahid does not speak, yet I won't tolerate any rudeness. Behave yourself."

"Yeah... Though I'm not entirely sure I understand."

Samluch appears unusually worried, but there is no cause for concern. As Fer mentioned, Lady Nahid is unlikely to divulge anything—perhaps very little, if at all. To witness this truth with our own eyes, we enter the chambers of the star princess. As previously mentioned, Nahid is an extraordinary individual. Given our emphasis on numbers and unity, it is rare for someone of her unmatched caliber to emerge among us, surpassing even the Kings of Evil.

Put simply, we are not destined for longevity. **ashavans**, who revere law and order, consider the prolongation of life contrary to divine providence—seen as an unsightly and arrogant act, a transgression against natural order, a taboo. Yet, exceptions exist for every rule, and there is a distinction between appearance and essence.

When circumstances require sacrifice, discussions of morality become futile. If it were possible to prevail by adhering to our ideals, we would have done so, but since it is not, we must accept it.

"It is a pleasure to see you in good health, Lady Nahid. My name is Ferdows, and today, I am entrusted with your care."

Fer bows respectfully, and I follow suit, showing our reverence. Samluch's audible gulp resonates beside me, yet Lady Naheed does not acknowledge her presence, or ours for that matter.

"What is this...?" Samluch whispers, dumbfounded, and Fer, standing tall, responds with firmness.

"As you can see, milady deigns to slumber."

"Sleep... I mean, what do you mean? Is she...?"

"Quiet. It is disrespectful. I will not tolerate it."

"Is she even alive?" Samluch's bewilderment and astonishment are apparent to all.

The room itself is adorned simply, lacking any distinctive features. Perhaps it reflects the character of its occupant, but it is hardly the bedchamber of a noble lady. However, cleanliness is not its defining feature—it exudes a sense of transparency, like the air in winter.

Devoid of color, it manifests an abyssal absence of life. Nahid sits by the window in the corner, frozen in place. Her gaze, only slightly turning, gazes outward, but her emerald eyes, fixed on the landscape, remain unblinking.

Silver hair cascades like a celestial stream, while her bosom, a testament to motherhood, remains motionless. There is an unwavering constancy, detached from the present, akin to an icon. Indeed, she is encased in the frozen confines of a concept called "time."



"The Seal of Freeze... We bestowed this name ourselves; we do not know its true designation, but it is yet another creation of my father. A barrier that halts time at a specific location, safeguarding its contents from any alteration."

"While we do not fully comprehend its workings, it can be activated with a simple press of a button. Its range of influence forms a cylinder, one meter in diameter and two meters in height—sufficient to encompass a person."

"However, until it is lifted or the device is destroyed, the contents will remain unaltered. Lady Nahid has dwelled within this frozen realm for the past twenty years, untouched by time, unaffected by harm... in perpetual..."

"I don't understand any of this!" Samluch's voice, tinged with irritation, reverberates through the colorless space.

"Why are you speaking so calmly about this? Freezing time? I don't comprehend it, but what could the princess have done to warrant such treatment? It's not right!"

"Far from it. Did you listen to my explanation?" Fer smiles wistfully, a weary yet compassionate smile.

Those he dislikes or finds uninteresting are addressed formally, while those he regards as comrades are treated as equals. It seems he detected something in Samluch's righteous anger—a raw but genuine emotion.

"Lady Nahid is an exceptional individual. Losing her would mean forfeiting any guarantee of encountering another possessing similar power. Now, as we mourn Lord Varhran, she remains our unwavering hope, one we cannot afford to lose."

"So, that's why you sealed her away? Here, for twenty years?"

"For two hundred, or even two thousand years if necessary. Until we have an opportunity to prevail, Lady Nahid's demise would pose an insurmountable inconvenience."

Such an approach is profoundly pragmatic. To avoid extinguishing the chance for a decisive battle. To ultimately emerge victorious. When a monumental objective hangs in the balance, the life of a single girl loses significance, be it given or taken...

His Majesty Sirius, the one who made this decision, might appear cruel and cold-hearted to an outsider. However, I cannot help but believe that his motivations extend beyond mere politics. Perhaps he did not wish to burden his sister, grieving the loss of her beloved, with the responsibility of restoring the Sacred Realm. Or maybe he hoped that within the temporal stasis, she would find solace, heal, even if from her perspective, it were but a fleeting respite. And upon awakening, she would witness the Sacred Realm restored to its former glory. Then, she would forge new bonds, experience love once more, preserving the

faces of Varhran and His Majesty within her soul, and the star princess would grace the world once again...

These may very well be the prayers whispered by the king, even as he condemns himself in the process. Yet, given his unwillingness to reveal his true intentions or weaknesses, such conjecture remains uncertain.

"And she agreed to this?"

"Most likely... It is the bond between brother and sister."

The brother, disheartened by his sister's sorrow, and the sister, cognizant of her brother's position and love. I choose to view it from such a sentimental standpoint, and I do not believe I am far off. After all, even within the frozen expanse of time, Nahid-sama's countenance...



"Well, yes, she's smiling. Though a few tears linger in the corners of her eyes."

Indeed, she is truly beautiful.

A pure yet soft smile, full of love, adorned the countenance of the star princess, resembling a luxurious gem that commanded the reverence of countless star spirits. She sat before me, sealed in frozen time, her consciousness suspended, unreachable. Despite the impossibility of reading her thoughts or memories, I couldn't help but ponder the significance behind her chosen place of confinement.

For a long time, this question had gnawed at my mind. Previous attempts to approach her face-to-face had been thwarted by vigilant associates, barring me from getting any closer. However, the current circumstances appeared more lenient, with Fer standing guard at the border. Given our longstanding acquaintance, I believed he wouldn't mind us venturing more freely. Seizing this opportunity, I took a step closer to Lady Naheed, cautiously navigating the delicate balance of respect and curiosity.

"Ah, so you've come to tidy up, haven't you?"

A voice broke the ethereal ambiance, abruptly shattering the effect. I turned to her, questioning her sudden interruption.

"Oh, just..." My response trailed off, leaving my intentions unclear. Nonetheless, the outcome was one that resonated with the depths of human nature.

What would someone who had been sealed away for countless years consider most valuable? It intrigued me. So, I approached Lady Nahid, aligning my gaze with hers, contemplating what landscape lay hidden beyond the confines of her frozen prison. And indeed, my intuition proved correct. Sitting by the window like a captive princess, her eyes reflected an image—a name whispered by Samluch, who had joined me in my observation.

In a voice laced with contempt and concern, she uttered the name of the relentless warrior, Magsarion. Outside the window, within Lady Nahid's line of sight, Magsarion swung his sword tirelessly in a corner of the forest. It seemed that Samluch, too, had noticed his presence.

As I watched Magsarion's relentless repetition of vertical strikes, devoid of refinement or elegance, I couldn't help but marvel at his singular focus. His movements lacked precision, and the artistic beauty that often accompanies mastery was absent. Instead, they showcased a reckless intensity, an unwavering determination to eradicate any obstacle in his path.

Magsarion's unyielding grip strength strained even the diabolical gloves forged with inhuman technology. Sweat and blood sprayed around him as flesh and bone strained under the immense pressure. The air trembled, seemingly screaming as it bore the brunt of his relentless strikes. It resembled a form of self-flagellation, driven by an unyielding resolve to eliminate anything that stood in his way. His purpose was simple—to kill, without regard for anything or anyone obstructing him. It was a raw and ruthless pursuit. Yet, it was undeniable that he possessed great strength.

What was the source of his power?

Was it an indomitable will?

These questions lingered, unanswered. As I continued to observe Magsarion's ceaseless onslaught, I noticed the peculiar setting surrounding him. The wing where Lady Nahid's quarters resided stood on the edge of the castle, adjacent to an untouched forest. Usually, she wouldn't have had a direct view from above, but in Magsarion's case, there was a hollow clearing devoid of trees or vegetation. It appeared as though a drought had struck that specific area.

These were not the works of loggers or farmers. It seemed that since the Sacred Realm's relocation, this land had borne the weight of countless swings and steps, drenched in sweat and blood. Over time, every tree had withered away completely, leaving behind a landscape reminiscent of the slow erosion caused by rain against stone. The forest would unlikely ever thrive in that desolate area again. Despite the desolation, Lady Nahid's smile still graced her lips as she gazed upon Magsarion.

Yet, he swung his sword relentlessly, seemingly indifferent to her presence. Clad in heavy armor and wielding a sword almost as tall as himself, he unleashed blow after blow, unceasingly pouring his entire being into each strike. The unimaginable strength of his grip strained even his demonic gloves, forged with otherworldly technology. Sweat and blood mingled, and the air quivered with the force of his cuts, as if screaming in response.

It was an exhibition of unrestrained violence, devoid of grace or finesse. Yet, within that violence, there was a discernible darkness—a resolute determination.

He wasn't concerned about being proper or respectable; his actions transcended reason. I couldn't help but recall Samluch's past comment, referring to Magsarion as a diligent worker. Now, as I watched him, it dawned on me what she meant. His relentless swings lacked finesse or skill, but they exuded an unwavering tenacity that defied any definition of beauty.

"For some, talent eludes them," Samluch's voice interjected, devoid of any inflection, breaking the silence that enveloped us.

"I couldn't understand it at first, but during our fight in Reilly's Village, I felt it. And now, as I watch him swing, I see it again. He lacks talent."

His vertical strikes continued, rough and ferocious, threatening to breach the very air that separated us. Yet, there was no precision in his movements, no trace of the elegance that often accompanies mastery. In other words, they were defined by recklessness, even clumsiness. His swordsmanship lacked not only refinement but also the rough brilliance that beauty could bestow upon it. Magsarion simply didn't fit within the conventional framework of what could be deemed "beautiful."

If one were to call it a lack of talent, they would not be far off the mark. And yet, he remained strong. I found myself pondering the reasons behind his strength.

Was it his unwavering willpower, fueled by the desire to avenge his deceased older brother, Varhran, ensuring his eternal rest?

Or perhaps it was his unwavering pride and duty towards Lady Nahid and King Sirius, destined to become his esteemed kin?

Such thoughts seemed to resonate with reality. Magsarion's love and respect for his brother and sister ran so deep that it had transformed him into a relentless force, enough to influence King Sirius' formal treatment of him. It was evident that the events of twenty years ago had instigated Magsarion's actions. However, there was more to it than revenge alone.

"There's no reason to doubt that the events of the past compelled Magsarion to act," I remarked, turning towards Fer, who had silently approached us. He stood behind me, looking down at Magsarion with a discerning gaze.

"Well, yes. Zurvan mentioned it once," Fer replied, his voice carrying a hint of satisfaction.

Samluch, surprised by Fer's confession, recoiled slightly. But having known about Fer's sentiments towards Magsarion, I wasn't entirely taken aback. In fact, our shared concern for Magsarion had, at times, fueled a sense of rivalry between us. While our paths might have diverged, our mutual attachment to Magsarion remained, causing a complex interplay between us.

"Please don't misunderstand me. I have no intention of imitating him, nor do I believe I possess the capability to do so. I merely recognize him as an exceptional blade, albeit different from Varhran."

Normally, a hero guides others, offering hope even in the darkest of times. It is an ideal to aspire to. Yet, we still mourn for the one who could have shown us the way. That is why Fer, despite his own aspirations, held reverence for the raging blade. He longed to become a divine blade himself, even though he knew he lacked the capacity for it.

Magsarion, drenched in clotting blood, possessed a strange allure, captivating Fer's admiration. As our conversation unfolded, Magsarion's relentless onslaught persisted. The clash of his sword against an invisible foe continued, creating a spectacle of sheer determination and unyielding resolve.

Despite the absence of talent or finesse, he was carving a path through the earth, creating his own version of hell. He refused to be ordinary, carrying a burden of responsibility far weightier than most. And though the world might condemn him, he pressed forward, determined to cross the ocean of blood that lay before him.

Our discussion had led us to this point, but there was a sense that further debate would be a futile endeavor. Magsarion's purpose was singular, and his unwavering commitment left little room for doubt or contemplation.

The three of us stood there, captivated by the sight before us, silently acknowledging the formidable spirit that resided within Magsarion—a spirit that defied conventional understanding and compelled us to question the boundaries of heroism itself.

With a guilty expression etched on her face, Samluch gently scratches the top of her head and takes a step back, her reserved demeanor towards Magsarion momentarily shaken by the view outside the window and Fer's words. Sensing the need to depart, she speaks softly.

"Come on, Quinn. I think it's time for us to grab something to eat."

"Yes, of course. Fer, are you finished with your tasks?" I inquire, turning to Fer, who has already tidied up his cleaning tools and straightened his attire.

"For now. The previous duty officer clearly wasn't lazy, so there's hardly anything left for me to do here," Fer responds, a note of finality in his voice.

Having completed our duties, we now face Lady Nahid, the mistress of the chambers. Samluch and I bow respectfully, expressing our gratitude for the honor of being in her presence.

"Well, Nahid-sama, we apologize for any disturbance caused. Thank you for granting us the indescribable honor of being in your presence. We hope to have the privilege of seeing you again in the future," Fer conveys his gratitude, his words carefully chosen to convey our utmost respect.

In response, Lady Naheed remains silent, as expected. Nonetheless, I believe that she deserves the utmost reverence, and even Samluch understands this. As we prepare to leave the chambers, I steal one final glance at Lady Nahid. She is undoubtedly still observing Magsarion, his relentless swinging of the sword captivating her attention. In Lady Naheed's memories, Magsarion appears to be around the same age as Reilly. Now she witnesses this young boy transforming into a demon, yet she smiles...

It is difficult to deny the unsettling aura emanating from this situation, but at the same time, her standards have always been markedly different from ours. Perhaps Lady Nahid has found reassurance in Magsarion's unwavering dedication, believing that our victory is inevitable.

Though we may be enveloped in temporary darkness, if the inner gaze of the Star Princess sees that Magsarion will lead us towards the light, granting us hope, then there could be no news more joyous. How I wish for it to be true.

"By the way, he returned to the kingdom because he exhausted his feathers, right? So is he simply doing this because he has nothing else to do until they replenish?" Samluch's question breaks through my thoughts, bringing me back to the present moment. I reply, shifting gears in conversation.

"That seems to be the case. After all, he possesses far more feathers than any of us."

Each **yazata** is granted a varying number of feathers according to the will of Vohu Mana, and the share used on missions is automatically restored upon returning to the Sacred Realm. While I've heard that His Majesty can somewhat control the regeneration rate, it generally remains the same for everyone—a quick recovery for small amounts and a slower one for larger quantities.

"How many feathers does he have?" Samluch winces visibly, prompting Fer and me to exchange a shrug.

"As far as I know, he has around twenty feathers. And now, probably even more."

Samluch's expression reflects her surprise and disbelief, while Fer and I maintain a nonchalant demeanor. Despite Magsarion's frequent defiance and his inclination to act like a true heretic, it is an undeniable truth that he is highly valued by the Star Spirit. Lady Nahid's smile serves as further confirmation. Yet, even Magsarion cannot completely disregard the will of the Sacred Realm due to the existence of this system.

Whether it brings him more benefits or harm, we must ensure that he becomes even more valuable. Whatever the case, we must endeavor to maximize his potential for the greater good.



As the tour of the castle, which Samluch had requested, nears its end, I realize that there are a few more places she should see. However, merely guiding her to these locations won't suffice given the nature of our client.

Personally, I would prefer to leave her to peruse the historical chronicles in the library, but I doubt she would agree to that. Therefore, we will have to part ways soon, and I can already foresee that we will soon be awaiting a new assignment.

Although our feathers have fully recovered, we are still bound by the need to wait for a mission to be entrusted to us. In essence, as long as we remain within the castle grounds, we are free to occupy ourselves with various activities. Yet, I long for a respite, a peaceful moment of rest.

But I harbor concerns that Samluch may still request that I show her the surrounding towns and villages. To be honest, I wish for her to find a kindred spirit and a close friend as

soon as possible. I could introduce her to someone, but for now, I yearn to be granted a brief respite. It's not that I don't get along with Samluch; rather, I have grown increasingly weary lately and would appreciate a moment of reprieve.

"Hey, Quinn. It seems like you're having a great time. You've made so many friends," Samluch remarks, observing my interactions with others.

Upon hearing her words, I understand that my modest desire is unlikely to be fulfilled.

"It's you..." I mutter under my breath.

Blocking our path in the corridor leading to the barracks, a man leans against a column. I involuntarily straighten up, while Fer's brows furrow in displeasure. Only Samluch stands with a blank expression, unfamiliar with the man before us.

"What do you want? We have nothing to discuss," I retort, my tone cold and distant.

The man's face stretches into a wide smile, exuding an air of constant mockery. Clad in a flamboyant cloak adorned with jingling embellishments and wearing a wide-brimmed hat that obscures his eyes, his appearance is undeniably ostentatious. He bears a resemblance to a jester, yet there's an undercurrent of danger and sharpness about him, reminiscent of a grinning beast. While he may be well-acquainted with everyone, he addresses me by name for a reason. After all, he was the **yazata** who I encountered first...



"Who is this?" Samluch inquires, seeking clarification.

"Zurvan... You could say he's my mentor..."

Following my departure from my father, during the time I was just a regular Quinn, he was the one who brought me into the Sacred Realm.

"Haha, don't be so uptight. Despite appearances, I've always worried about you," Zurvan chimes in, his ear-to-ear smile persisting, as if he perpetually mocks everyone around him.

"I'm truly flattered. In that case, I would be delighted if you could immediately turn around and leave"

To be frank, I dislike him. We worked together for an entire year since our first encounter, but it doesn't change the fact that he's a troublesome, frivolous, heartless individual completely adrift from everything.

There have been countless occasions when I contemplated killing him, even if it meant breaking my **Commandment**. And I'm not the only one who shares this impression of him—Fer agrees, and the rest of the Sacred Realm prefers to avoid him.

If even Magsarion has like-minded individuals, Zurvan could easily be considered the most detested **yazata**. However, I cannot deny his skill. In terms of military merit, he trails behind only Magsarion, and the fact that he accomplishes this despite his laziness further exacerbates his temperament. I don't wish to dwell on it, but he possesses a certain kind of genius. If Varhran had a rotten core, it would manifest in someone just like Zurvan.

"Quinn, what's with that face you're making? It seems like you're up to something..." Samluch interrupts, her question pulling me back to the present.

"Please, don't worry about it. Now..."

I deflect Samluch's inquiry, returning to the matter at hand. Still, she undoubtedly possesses the talent to attract peculiar individuals, but be that as it may...

"If you have business with us, Zurvan, please don't prolong it unnecessarily. Especially considering that nothing good awaits us when you're involved."

"How cold you are! Don't you know that peace and love are my motto?"

Zurvan retorts, his smile remaining fixed, as if he's toying with his prey.

"Your love is directed solely toward yourself, and your world is a perpetual whirlwind. In other words, you bring nothing but trouble... Yes, I'm well aware of this, so make it quick."

My disdain for him is growing stronger.

"You're right, as always. I'd like to inform you that a decision has been made regarding your beloved Magsarion. And, by the way, it concerns me as well. What do you say we both go to hell together, you outcasts?"

Zurvan's words hit like a bullet, leaving me with a chill running down my spine.

"What?.."

I gasp, taken aback. Memories of Samluch's earlier discussion flood my mind. The most probable outcome for Magsarion would be to throw him into the depths of hell... Such an outcome seemed logical to me, but I never considered that Zurvan would be sent alongside him. Not only are they both outcasts, shunned by the others, but they also represent the greatest martial prowess within the current Sacred Realm. What kind of thorny path awaits them?

"Is it true? ... Although, I suppose you never lie just for the sake of lying," I utter, my voice filled with disbelief and uncertainty.

Zurvan looks at me with a mocking gaze, savoring every moment. Each word he utters carries deliberate weight, delivered like a bullet.

"Come with us. Let's play," he proposes, his eyes gleaming with mischief.

4

Embrace the weight of your destiny and transcend the limitations of this flawed world. Let your name echo through the ages, carrying the hopes and dreams of countless souls. Become the beacon of light that guides the lost, the protector of the weak, and the embodiment of unwavering justice.

With unwavering determination, Sirius, the young man who once believed in his own legend, rises from his solitary slumber.

In the serene throne room, bathed in the moonlight's cold touch, he sits with an air of regality, yet the years have etched deep wrinkles upon his face, revealing the passage of time.

His eyes, once vibrant and full of life, now hold a distant, indifferent gaze, as if the trials of duty have stripped away his human essence. To an outsider, he may appear as a monument weathered by countless storms, an embodiment of greatness or perhaps even madness. But in truth, Sirius is the one who remains while all else has left him.

His father, mother, mentors, comrades-in-arms, and all those who shared in the legend of that fateful day have passed away, leaving behind only the memories of a bygone era. The present is a desolate landscape devoid of the warmth and camaraderie he once cherished.

With Varhran's demise, the dream that kindled in Sirius' heart also met its untimely end. It was a tale that began with the presence of a hero, a protagonist destined for an impeccable finale that none could contest.

Sirius, overflowing with joy, envisioned a future where he would stand alongside the true hero, where his sister would find happiness, and where applause would resound like thunderous waves. He yearned for a universe free from fear and sorrow, a realm where the impossible would become possible—a world of miracles. But that day never arrived. The brilliance of that dream has faded, scattered into fragments that resist reconstruction. Yet, Sirius understands that only a genuine hero can fulfill such a dream, and his feeble attempts as a fake will never suffice.

Prayers remains unanswered, hope elusive. And yet, he refuses to succumb to weakness or surrender his purpose. In the silent throne room, he musters the strength to speak, his voice heavy and resolute. It resonates through the air like a tolling bell, carrying the weight of his determination and the seeds of dominion.

"The world is flawed. To witness such a fate befall you... I do not recognize it. Varhran, I Commandment to fashion a new world, one that befits your greatness."

In his proclamation lies a shadow cast by the radiance of the true hero. Sirius contemplates his own imperfections and embraces the notion that his destiny is to pave the way for the ultimate ending—a finale that transcends the boundaries of his own limitations.

To achieve this, he must assume the role of an inadequate ruler, guiding his flawed government towards a vision that will forever honor Varhran's indomitable spirit. He acknowledges his own mediocrity, understanding that it would be an insult to his friend's memory to believe he could match his brilliance. Thus, he accepts his place as a flawed substitute, allowing the legend of the hero to shine with an immortal radiance, an unattainable ideal for eternity. Even in his inadequacy, he proclaims, "I can do it. Though it would have been better if you were the one, my friend. I will keep my promise."

And so, the young man's dream persists—a dream of surpassing strength, unwavering courage, and unparalleled fairness. He implores Varhran to rise as the miracle everyone yearns for, to ascend beyond the realm of mortals and become the embodiment of divine hope. In this cold, solitary throne room, Sirius Commandments to shape a world that reflects the brilliance of his fallen friend.

With every decision, every action, he will prove the unwavering faith he holds in Varhran's heroic potential. For even in his own deficiencies, he believes that someone like him can pave the path to greatness.

And so, he rises from the depths of uncertainty, his heart aflame with an unwavering resolve. The young man who once dreamed of becoming a living legend now embraces his

role as an imperfect ruler, determined to fulfill his promise and offer a future worthy of his departed friend.

As the moonlight dances upon his weathered features, Sirius stands as a testament to the enduring power of dreams, the resilience of the human spirit, and the unwavering bond between two souls intertwined in the tapestry of fate. In his hands rests the destiny of a new world—a world where heroes are revered, miracles are realized, and the legend of Varhran lives on.

Chapter 3: Corpse of the Dragon Star - Translated by @ashmxt.t

1

The desert stretches as far as the eye can see, a vast expanse of desolation and solitude. Its rough and empty landscape, characterized by red sand and sporadic rocks, bears a resemblance to scattered scales on a mythical creature. Though the morning transitions into noon, the thick clouds shroud the land in perpetual twilight. There is no sign of rain, only the relentless wind howling close to the ground, whipping up clouds of crimson dust and claiming fragments of the already barren scenery.

The depletion of this land is undeniable; it resembles nothing less than the lifeless carcass of a colossal beast. In truth, that is precisely what it is. This is the remains of Zahhak, the Dragon Star. Once a planet adorned with four expansive continents separated by narrow oceanic corridors, it now appears as a shattered lump of earth from the vantage point of space.

It is difficult to fathom that a mere two hundred years ago, this very planet was adorned with lush greenery and teeming with life. It brings to mind the tale of the goose that laid the golden eggs. The foolish man, driven by anger at the bird for bestowing only one treasure each day, sought to peek inside its entrails, leading to its demise. Yet, the tragedy that unfolded here was far more severe, surpassing any comparable calamity.

One man slew the Star Spirit, the harbinger of all blessings, consumed its essence, and claimed its wealth and power as his own. In essence, he usurped the throne of the Star Spirit, subjecting the inhabitants to unimaginable suffering for his own prosperity.

He scoffed at the notion that greed begets death, dismissing it as the babble of ignorant cattle. Thus, the debauchery of his reign persists to this day. Kaikhosru, the sixth King of Evil, now rules over this planet of exploitation and tyranny.

Instances of malevolent Star Spirits ascending to the position of Kings of Evil are not unheard of. When a celestial entity, a representative of the mightiest "race" in the universe, succumbs to evil will, it is only fitting to bestow upon it the title of King of Evil.

In the present era, the first King of Evil, Khvarenah, and the fifth King of Evil, Mashyana, both fit this description. While Kaikhosru may not have been a Star Spirit by birth, it does

not diminish his power. Even now, having seized everything from his predecessor, he remains a formidable force, equal in strength to the pure-blooded Star Spirits.

Furthermore, due to his mixed lineage, he possesses a distinctive perversion. From the moment of their birth, Star Spirits are tasked with safeguarding their planets and their inhabitants. The extent of their intervention and methods may vary, but never would they intentionally deplete their own domains. Such an act would be tantamount to self-destruction, an unspeakable taboo for any sentient life form.

Kaikhosru, however, is different. To him, the planet is not so much his own body as it is an adornment, akin to a hermit crab's shell.

It is, in essence, a trophy in every sense of the word, a wealth to be expended. Though he may hold attachment to his possessions, he has no intention of cherishing them indefinitely. If they were to ever be exhausted, he would simply move on to another planet, repeating the cycle of ruin.

It is a remarkably farsighted perspective. From Kaikhosru's point of view, his possessions are limited to himself and his immediate surroundings. The fate that awaits his homeland after his departure does not concern him. In essence, it is a grand robbery. His "work" will only conclude when the riches have been completely depleted, and he gazes upon the empty treasury. The fact that he has continued to extract every last drop from this planet for two centuries only attests to its former abundance.

Simultaneously, it reveals the extent of the King of Evil's insatiable greed, as he appropriates every conceivable value for his own benefit, down to the tiniest fragment. The once fertile lands, nurtured by the benevolent Dragon Star, now teeter on the brink of death, victimized by the ravenous serpent of avarice.

The life force of the planet wanes, yet the King of Evil remains indifferent. Relentlessly, he squeezes the land, ruling with merciless tyranny, seemingly deriving pleasure from the faintest cries of his dying dominion. Though he may not directly engage in acts of destruction, his atrocities know no bounds. Like a silken noose steadily tightening around the planet's neck, they leave no room for even the slightest glimmer of hope to emerge.

Resistance proves futile. The denizens of Zahhak's remains, save for the **daevas** who stand alongside the King of Evil, have been stripped of their pride and dignity, consigned to lives of perpetual hunger. Death is an inevitability, and its arrival is imminent. Each individual knows their fate, yet they strive to endure for even a moment longer.

Even now, amidst the swirling clouds of red dust, one can witness the spectacle of a colossal lizard, capable of swallowing a horse whole, locked in a desperate struggle with an insect resembling a scorpion.

These two apex predators, each claiming the desert as its domain, had previously avoided direct conflict. Yet, now, on the precipice of starvation, they are deprived of reason, reduced

to mere savagery. Above them, a flock of scavenging birds circles on ebony wings, emitting ominous cries in anticipation of a feast. Scattered across this parched wasteland lie countless casualties of the struggle for survival. Their remains, gnawed to the bone, exhibit no trace of flesh or internal organs. This pitiful sight no longer resembles corpses; it is the remnants of carcasses left behind. Among them, many were once human.

Such is the fate that awaits the scattered refugees, those who abandon their homes in search of a better existence. The ceaseless drought offers no hope for a bountiful harvest, yet the so-called taxes are imposed without mercy.

The freedom of choice afforded to them amounts to a grim decision between perishing within their homes or embarking on a perilous journey. Even now, if one were to cast a glance backward, they would witness several groups, waist-deep in sand, continuing their desperate exodus.

Their futures can manifest in only three ways: succumbing to starvation, falling prey to a chance encounter with a beast, or being slain by the soldiers serving their despotic ruler. On this planet, all military power, administration, and production lie within the grasp of the **Drujvants**. Though the soldiers and minor officials on the ground may lack the stature of **daevas**, in the eyes of the ordinary **ashavans**, they represent the embodiment of abhorrent vice and cruelty.

Shameless fiends, they perpetrate acts of rape, murder, and even the destruction of all life with no hint of compassion, as if such actions were inherent and unchallenged. Their hearts harbor nothing but a desire to subjugate the **ashavans** and a fear of incurring the wrath of the King of Evil. If one were to attempt to decipher the rationale behind the despicable, reptilian nature of these cowardly demons, it would likely reveal a belief that ordinary people exist merely as a race of slaves, destined to toil in the dirt and serve as entertainment and enrichment for their masters. To these vile creatures, such pitiful worms are worth less than cattle. Should they dare to shirk their assigned "duties," no matter how trivial, they deserve no forgiveness.

Thus, they kill, true to their status as **Drujvants**, following the instincts dictated by the **Avesta**. Diligently patrolling the desert on bipedal lizards bred for warfare, they pursue any refugees they encounter, leaving no survivors. They consider their purpose to be the practice of sophisticated savagery upon defenseless victims, rejoicing in the shedding of blood and invoking the name of King Kaikhosru with pride.

To them, it is a sacred ritual, an offering that nourishes the arid land, staining the scarlet sands even more vividly with the crimson hue of fading lives. The unfolding tragedy elicits tears, yet the refugees continue their trudge with unsteady steps. Perhaps constant deprivation has stripped them of the ability to run, let alone resist. They remain unresponsive, even as heads roll and spears pierce bodies within arm's reach. With

deadened eyes, they fixate on the desolate horizon, continuing their relentless march until the final breath escapes their weary forms.

On the distant, hazy horizon, rumors persist of a paradise existing beyond this desolation. For these hopeless refugees, it has become their last bastion, their final destination. Yet, unbeknownst to them, Arzang, one of the eighteen oases within the Dragon Star, holds no respite.

Within Arzang's shimmering streets, the illusion of pristine cleanliness deceives the eye. However, veer away from the main thoroughfares, and the labyrinthine alleys reveal a different truth—a truth marred by the presence of wasteland refugees huddled together, adding to the mounting corpses strewn about from starvation.

Their grim task involves maintaining minimal hygiene by stripping clothes from the deceased, loading them onto carts, and discarding them outside the city walls. Only through such labor can they earn meager morsels of sustenance. Yet, even this work can only be undertaken under the cover of darkness, lest they draw the attention of vigilant authorities. Once caught in the act, they are swiftly executed, showing no mercy for tarnishing the city's aesthetics.

They are denied even the basic dignity of providing a proper burial for their deceased and offering prayers for their souls. As **Ashavans**, they are forbidden from descending into cannibalism, yet the extent of their endurance remains uncertain. Arzang's ruling class derives perverse pleasure from tormenting the weak and witnessing their descent into decay.

In essence, whether inside or outside the city walls, those who do not belong to the privileged class are destined to face nothing but despair. Even if the refugees were to achieve their goals, their circumstances would remain unchanged, if not worsened. Consumed by gluttony and hedonism, both the **Drujvants** and the **Ashavans**, trapped in a cycle of relentless tyranny, stand in stark contrast. This stark dichotomy is still evident today within the confines of the magnificent crystal palace.

The elite, rather than openly mocking the starving masses below, choosing to ignore them entirely. The gulf between them is wider than the expanse between heaven and earth, exceeding even the most outlandish conjectures. The uppermost floor of the tower spans an expanse so vast that it could comfortably accommodate a small village. Astonishingly, this immense space is occupied by nothing more than a single bath. Yet, it remains empty of water, instead filled with a quantity of wine that could rival a medium-sized pond. The fragrant wine, so potent that it could make one's head spin, is of such high quality that the cost of a mere handful could purchase an entire house.

Perched on the edge of this pool, submerging only her legs up to the knees, sits a young girl, her nudity unabashed. She occupies this floor in solitary grandeur, cradling a goblet in her hands. However, her disinterested gaze conveys her lack of interest in the lake of wine laid out before her.

Though it contains all the juices extracted from the surrounding villages, its value to her lies solely in its ability to cleanse her feet. Consequently, the next day, it will be replaced in its entirety. She doesn't even consider sending the discarded wine down to the lower classes.

In contrast to this blasphemous excess, the girl indulges in sips of the noble alcohol specially granted to her by her master, savoring it drop by drop. Her only sadness stems from the realization that it is nearing its end, causing her to sigh intermittently, as if this were the most wretched fate to befall her.

Occasionally, she takes a morsel of meat or fruit from a nearby pile, lightly biting it, only to complain in a hushed tone about its inferior taste before spitting it out. This embodiment of insolence, bordering on madness, remains unfazed by any divine retribution that might befall her.

Outwardly, she exudes a nymph-like beauty, yet an ominous aura permeates her very being, unmistakably marking her as a **daeva**. And rightfully so, for this girl is none other than the seventeenth concubine of the malevolent King Kaikhosru, ruler of Arzang and the Crystal Princess Nadia. The Dragon Star Oases hold great significance as locations visited by Kaikhosru, who has ascended to the realm of the Star Spirits.

These places of power, known as dragonholes, witness the materialization of the planet's gifts when the King of Evil descends upon them. The lands surrounding these dragonholes thrive until their life force is thoroughly depleted, making them gifts bestowed by Kaikhosru upon his beloved women.

Eighteen cities for eighteen concubines, each bearing the name of a precious stone. The varying radiance of these cities reveals a strict hierarchy of favor, discernible to any outside observer. Nadia is bestowed the seventeenth place, Crystal. In simple terms, she is naught but a low-ranking lover, a fact that unsettles her greatly. The king's visit is overdue, and the gifts bestowed upon her will soon dwindle.

Has he grown weary of her?

Should this indeed be the case, it does not bode well for her. Nadia is still young, having served as a concubine for a mere thirty years. Yet, she refuses to believe that she is inferior in any way to her superior mistresses. She remains absolutely certain of her beauty, her prowess in bed, and her capacity for cruelty—traits cherished by the king. She has no doubt that upon Kaikhosru's return, he will be pleased both with the state of Arzang and with her body, thus propelling her ten ranks higher.

But at present, such aspirations remain unfulfilled, leaving her with naught but anticipation—and that vexes her greatly. To quell the rising tides of hysteria within her, Nadia resolves to slaughter ten thousand plebeians at the break of dawn each day.

Unbeknownst to her, this course of action will exterminate all the **Ashavans** residing within her domain within a matter of days, but such considerations elude her interest.

Ultimately, it matters not if she is the last one standing on this earth. Arzang was bestowed upon her by Kaikhosru, granting her the authority to dispose of it as she sees fit. And if favor continues to be bestowed upon her, unimaginable riches will be hers without delay. With no reservations, she indulges herself without restraint, bathing in opulence as if it were an endless ocean. The decree of the great Kaikhosru to revel in greed is her sole truth, leaving no room for any other considerations. For her, there is nothing else. She will not hesitate.

She understands that the king detests frugality above all else, and thus she gulps down the dragon water she had been savoring until now. This elixir, containing the concentrated essence of the planet, bestows a pleasure so intoxicating that a common man could lose his sanity from a mere drop. Even for a high-ranking **daevas** like Nadia, imbibing such a concoction is not without risks. In the worst case, it could leave her scarred for life. However, she does not ponder upon such perils.

She dismisses them as improbable concerns. The feast shall never cease, and greatness is promised to her alone. For she loves the King of Evil more ardently than anyone else and has Commandmentd her unwavering loyalty to earn his affection. As the liquid courses through her veins, her porcelain-white skin flushes crimson, exuding an enchanting aroma. She feels a surge of elation and a moral elevation, descending to the pool where she revels in uncontrollable laughter. Cupping the crimson wine in her hands, she showers her head with it, relishing the sheer delight that emanates from her entire being. Her lips bear a lingering trace of the drink, and fangs begin to protrude from the corners of her mouth, slowly elongating with an ominous creak.

Meat—she craves meat. She yearns for a man, desiring to conquer him. The whirlpool of hunger and lust surging within her possesses a mesmerizing charm, igniting a scorching golden hue in her eyes. This lends her the appearance of a seductive demoness, captivating countless men—an irresistible temptation leading only to death. She is beauty, debauchery, and malevolence personified. Sinister as crystal, yet radiant as a quagmire.

Nadia firmly believes that such a lifestyle is befitting both the kin of the vile dragon and the concubine of the King of Evil. She holds steadfast in her conviction that this way of life is pure, genuine. Thus, she anticipates that her prayers and hopes will soon be answered, just as she expects.

"I see you're having fun, Nadia."

The voice reverberates throughout the Crystal Palace, resounding across Arzang. Its sonorous intonation exudes regal grandeur and audacity. A palpable weight, akin to that of a formidable entity, permeates the very essence of the voice. While the sentiments it

conveys can only be described as love, the gulf separating the monarch from his subjects is so vast that it becomes a poison to commoners.

Shimmering scales of iridescent hues, an embodiment of hegemony, cascade like molten gold. Nadia's heart sinks the **Ashavans** into despair and inebriates the **Drujvants**, but they both remain awestruck—there is no question as to who possesses such magnificence. This is the voice of the dragon, the true god of this planet—the King of Evil, Kaikhosru.



"Kaikhosru, light of my eyes!"

Nadia swiftly turns, her countenance brimming with joy, and hastens toward the source of the voice. Etiquette fades into oblivion, for her king concerns himself little with such trifles. On the contrary, such audacious flirtation delights him immeasurably, particularly when it emanates from a place of genuine affection. With every fiber of her being, she declares, "This is how much I adore you. You heartless traitor, there is no forgiveness for you... How could you abandon me?"

"My apologies. I never forgot about you. It was merely a minor matter."

Nadia wraps her arms around the neck of the colossal amethyst dragon statue, caressing it with voluptuous abandon. Wine perpetually flows from its mouth, drenching the seventeenth concubine, while she playfully feigns jealousy. In essence, Kaikhosru is present solely as a voice transmitted through the gemstone dragon. His corporeal form remains in another realm, rendering this encounter a mere fragment of his presence.

Nadia comprehends this truth, which fuels her fervent display of indignation. She genuinely rejoices upon hearing his voice, but that alone is insufficient for her. She yearns for his physical presence, to share a bed with him.

"What could be more important than meeting me? Have you fallen for another woman once more?"

"You are perceptive, my dear. But do not fret. My actions were not in error.

In the depths of Nadia's heart, a mixture of irritation and excitement churns as she absorbs the news of yet another rival. The realization dawns upon her that while order is the customary way of life for the **Ashavans**, the **Drujvants** thrive on struggle and careerism. Yet, not once does she entertain the thought of relinquishing her position. If she must fight, whether on the battlefield or in the realm of seduction, she will not reveal a trace of weakness.

"We need to eliminate the plebeians swiftly," she declares, her voice laden with contempt.

This feeble-willed rabble, responsible for failing to meet the expectations of her king, deserves to have their ranks thinned. And in carrying out this task, it shall not be deemed a sin in her eyes.

"What a sweet creature you are, Nadia. I've always admired that about you."

Kaikhosru continues with a gentle tone, as if consoling his concubine.

"I, too, was once part of the rabble. To take, to devour, to rise above—these are crucial aspects of our world, you see. Greed is the true virtue."

Nadia nods in understanding, her eyes closing languidly as if whispering into the ear of a distant interlocutor. Before her mind's eye, a paradise of atrocities unfolds, where the **Ashavans** drown in a ceaseless deluge of blood, tears, and suffering, while the **Drujvants** test the boundaries of debauchery. It is a spectacle of unparalleled beauty, stretching as far as the eye can behold.

It was Nadia who brought this vision to life, all in the name of love and loyalty to Kaikhosru. Therefore, it cannot be fathomed that the king would not be delighted by her creation. At least, that is the sincere belief that reverberates within Nadia's being.

"Hmm, I am certain. I am certain it signifies..." Kaikhosru's calm and gentle voice continues, but something shifts in the air.

Nadia's senses prick with unease, causing her to lift her face, yet she struggles to discern the source of her growing anxiety. Though he still loves her and flirts with her, of that there

is no doubt, an inexplicable perspiration beads on Nadia's brow. The eyes of the King of Evil, carved from amethyst, bore into her, their brilliance penetrating her very essence.

"If I have unknowingly offended..." she stammers, seeking to explain her unease, but Kaikhosru interrupts, his voice frigidly assuring her, "Worry not. You need not burden your mind with such trivialities. There is nothing for you to concern yourself with."

Though his words appear to praise her for her accomplishments, the coldness underlying them only intensifies Nadia's apprehension. Breathing becomes laborious, words catch in her throat, and an icy grip seizes her entire being.

The king's presence remains as gentle as ever, yet an arctic chill courses through her veins, seizing her heart. Like a frog ensnared by the gaze of a snake or a helpless insect trapped under the scrutiny of a dragon, Nadia realizes, with mounting horror, that she cannot so much as stir a finger.

"Surely, this cannot be," she attempts to scream, but her voice fails to materialize. Her visage, mirrored in the crystalline form of the dragon, metamorphoses into the same ethereal substance. Hair, nails, skin, and bones all undergo a transformation

In an unwavering tone, the King of Evil, Kaikhosru, declares, "I don't care if you believe in me or not. Should you choose to act defiantly or indulge in excess, I will grant you my forgiveness. I have bestowed upon you this privilege. As my representatives, it is your duty to exhaust my wealth. Is it not?"

Just before the final transformation into a crystalline form, Nadia manages to cast a fleeting glance back at her deeds. Yet, the perplexity within her intensifies. In her rigidifying mind, a singular question whirls incessantly:

"Why? I love you. That is why I yearned for your love, for your recognition. That is why I reveled in my malevolence. Until the very end, I followed the **Avesta**, traversing the path befitting a **daeva**... Is that not true?" she implores, her voice consumed by desperation.

So, why?

Why did she not succeed?

She cannot comprehend. It eludes her grasp like smoke dissipated by the wind. The words echo relentlessly within her:

"I don't understand. I don't understand. I don't understand. I don't understand!"

"I cannot tolerate stinginess, just as I abhor wastefulness," Kaikhosru asserts coldly.

"My possessions should mirror my essence and voraciously consume my wealth down to the very marrow. Do not squander lives that still hold utility. It is a betrayal of your master, Nadia."

His name is Kaikhosru, the King of Evil. He stands as the Star Spirit of the corpse of the dragon, a being synonymous with the very planet itself—Zahhak.

Consequently, every facet existing within Zahhak falls under the dominion of this malevolent dragon. Not even the tiniest flea possesses the right to perish without the king's consent.

Every drop of blood, every dying cry, and the minutest fragments of one's soul must be wrung out completely, leaving no trace behind. Until this process is fulfilled, they cannot die, nor can they be killed. Greed and pettiness bind them inescapably, an inexorable destiny that persists until they are reduced to nothingness. Nay, it is even said that the void left behind is claimed by Kaikhosru himself.

"And that is where you erred."

"I did not deceive you when I professed my fondness for you, but you allowed yourself to be carried away. Arzang now belongs to me."

Even before Nadia hears the final verdict from the king, she completes her transformation, turning into a crystalline entity—a precious princess. But the tale does not culminate there. Resonating from the heavens or emanating from the depths of the planet, Kaikhosru's dragon voice reverberates across Arzang and its surroundings.

"The trial is not yet concluded. These ignoramuses, brazenly squandering their king's wealth without comprehending its value, staining the planet like mindless cattle unaware of the true meaning of "luxury." Such sacrilege is a grave sin. Hence, the King of Evil proclaims that their rightful payment is to be exacted. Embrace a new existence. Adorn my palace!"

In an instant, all the **Drujvants** of Arzang undergo a metamorphosis. Some become gold, others transform into sapphire. Much like their former ruler, Nadia, they transmute into gems and precious metals. Then, the rain begins to pour. It descends upon the land, offering moisture and welcoming the benevolent gift from the heavens. It has been an eternity since such rain last blessed the earth, so long that its memory has faded into obscurity.

The soil is nourished, embracing this gracious offering. The remaining **Ashavans** watch in a frenzy. Those who had belittled them disappear in an instant, and the crystal palace transforms into an abandoned treasury. Gathering provisions from its storehouse becomes an effortless task, and under the enchanting rain, blossoms unfurl before their eyes.

Primitive agriculture can now thrive in this land. It can be deemed a miraculous stroke of luck for their salvation was secured at the eleventh hour. Yet, the countenances of the

Ashavans do not reflect elation. Fear courses through their veins, for they comprehend the depths of darkness that lie ahead. They have been spared. But for what purpose? Undoubtedly, it is to be exploited once more. To forge an even more profound hell. Death has been withheld from them, only to fill their days with unending torment. There will be no respite. Hope is granted, leading only to despair. They are caught in the relentless cycle, where life and death are but pawns.

King Kaikhosru, the embodiment of absolute evil reigning over the corpse of the star, gazes upon them, savoring their tragedy like a comedy. The dragon's eyes shimmer with delight, and his avaricious fangs bare themselves in a smile, while he goads them forward, exclaiming, "What's the matter? Dance!"

Humanity is frail. Even when aware that transient joy will inevitably transform into repeated suffering, they extend their hands toward salvation. They cannot help but cling to it, ensnared by a vicious emotion. Each one condemns themselves, yet they cannot stifle a sigh of relief, nor hold back tears.

Kaikhosru continues to push them forward, relishing the amalgamation of their insect-like emotions, aware of their role as possessions and reveling in the mockery of their souls.

"Pray, wish, sing for a miracle. If you yearn for salvation, squeeze the very life out of yourselves. Can't manage it? That is not my concern."

In these domains, the fate of the venomous serpent prevails.

Take.

Desecrate

Love.

Desire.

"I shall determine the length of your lives. Dare not to die. Do not think you can leave from this plane without sacrificing your very being to me."

Everyone comprehends that a miracle can only originate from external sources now. However, they are already deprived of the willpower necessary to believe in such matters.

2

Teleportation, an extraordinary gift, offers unparalleled convenience in our work. It is an irreplaceable tool, granting us the ability to traverse vast distances in an instant. However, despite its immense power, teleportation is not without its limitations. It operates within a set of rules, imposing restrictions on its usage.

When undertaking interstellar teleportation, Vohu Mana, the Star Spirit, must first chart the course. Precise knowledge of the source of the distress signal on the targeted planet is necessary to establish the coordinates for teleportation. Once the destination is determined, a portal is prepared at the specified coordinates, enabling our passage.

Subsequently, envoys are appointed, their beings imbued with the corresponding program by the **yazatas**, who received the royal decree. Only those bearing the appropriate programming are permitted to traverse the predetermined route. Without fulfilling these essential conditions, interstellar teleportation remains impossible. Any attempt to bypass these protocols would result in a wasteful expenditure of feathers, the resource required for teleportation. In the worst-case scenario, one could find themselves lost in the vast expanse of space, a risk deemed too great to undertake. It is only logical that such a powerful and convenient gift is designed with safeguards to prevent reckless misuse.

While it is possible to revisit planets previously explored, there are still formalities to be observed. Reporting the intent to revisit a planet both before and after departure is required, and the availability of the route must be confirmed. Therefore, teleportation cannot be employed at will but is subject to necessary procedures. These principles also apply when teleporting within the same planet. Movement is limited to places already visited or visible at the time of teleportation. Consequently, it is advisable to utilize local modes of transportation on unexplored planets until familiarity is established. In our current circumstance, we find ourselves enduring the discomfort of a covered wagon for two days and nights.

"Ah, how tiring. My ass feels like it's on fire," Samluch laments, sprawled on the floor of the already cramped wagon.

I have lost count of how many times she has voiced her complaints, as they persist incessantly.

"Enough already. There's no point in complaining. You yourself agreed that this was the best option."

It seems futile to try and pacify her, and I have relinquished my attempts to do so. In a way, this speaks volumes about Fer's character, for he continues to scold her, maintaining a stern gaze. Despite his sour mood, he has a conscientious and upright nature, and I have come to accept that fact. Even though he has reverted to using the informal "you" when addressing her, it is evident that he is on edge.

"Are you new to this or something?"

However, she has grown accustomed to squandering her privileges. It's not a matter of negligence, but rather, it's about being unashamed of one's actions.

"It's so-so. But one gets used to the good things so quickly... What can I do?"

It is challenging to restrain her in such situations. Both Fer and I have long realized the futility of attempting to calm her down. Consequently, considering her disposition, it can be quite a hassle.

"I don't understand why we are running towards our spot like complete fools. Couldn't Vohu Mana teleport us closer?"

"Vohu Mana is genderless, Samluch. Not an uncle or an aunt, not a grandfather or a grandmother," I interject calmly, feeling compelled to correct her misconception. However, Samluch remains oblivious to my correction.

"If it weren't for this passing caravan, we would have withered away there. I know he has been in slumber for twenty years, but he can't be clueless, right? Or did His Majesty make a mistake?"

"Hey, you should stop," Fer interjects with a frenzied expression, lowering his voice.

He is evidently under considerable stress, and maintaining composure for such an extended period must be arduous. If they were to engage in a dispute here, it would inconvenience the caravan owners and potentially hinder our mission. As such, it is my duty to intervene and prevent any further conflict.

"We won't have to endure much longer, Samluch. I understand your discontent, but the actions of the celestial guide and His Majesty always bear significance. It would be wise to show more respect."

"Well, what are they thinking?"

"Suppose... they want us to comprehend the state of affairs on this planet. The fact remains that in just two days, you have already lost all patience. Is it merely a personal matter for you?"

"...Well, that might be true. It's nothing like the Sacred Realm."

It goes without saying that the Sacred Realm exceeds all comparisons, but even when compared to her homeland, the conditions here are exceptionally harsh. Stretching from one end to the other, nothing but barren wasteland greets our eyes. Except for the wind, which seems to cleanse everything in its path, there are no signs of life to be seen.

As a **yazata** who has visited countless planets, I can affirm that this planet is plagued by an indescribable thirst. Even desert worlds and icy landscapes harbor life forms that have adapted to such harsh environments. Planets tend to align themselves with compatible life forms, showcasing a natural inclination towards vitality, even on uninhabited worlds.

However, this star is undeniably hurtling towards its own demise. Not due to the culmination of its natural lifespan, but because every passing moment sees its bounties being exploited for selfish gain, draining its vitality and pushing it towards the abyss.

This desolate landscape unmistakably indicates a lack of future prospects, an abode where tyranny reigns supreme, free to unleash any form of cruelty that pleases its whims. It is the remains of the Star Dragon Zahhak.

"We find ourselves in the lair of the King of Evil. It's not surprising," Fer murmurs, his voice filled with barely contained indignation.

Ultimately, the collective dissatisfaction shared by all of us, including myself, can be traced back to this fact. It is unlikely that any **yazata** would remain indifferent when confronted with this planet. The sixth King of Evil, who has usurped the Star Spirit's rightful place, seeks to devour all the riches he can lay his hands upon. Though he may not be as bloodthirsty as some of the other King of Evils, his level of danger is diminished. Yet, how could I have spoken with such unwarranted confidence?

"Thus, we should be grateful for this encounter. Even on this forsaken planet, there are those willing to assist strangers like us. The knowledge that goodness has not yet perished warms the soul, does it not?" I propose, searching for the positive aspects amidst the bleakness.

"Alright, alright. Enough with the lectures"

Her childish demeanor elicits a smile from me, while Fer sighs in response.

"I don't entirely agree with Quinn, but focusing on the positive side is more productive. Encountering this sizable caravan was fortunate for us, as it ensured that Zurvan traveled in a separate cart. You must have realized by now what sort of wretch he is"

"Ah, be quiet. Don't mention him, for the sake of the **Avesta**."

On that fateful day in the Sacred Realm, Zurvan requested—or rather, forced—us to accompany him. In truth, there was no fault in this, as it was only natural for a **yazata** to offer their body in the fight against evil. No one intended to resist such a duty. Ultimately, when working alongside unpleasant individuals, personal opinions fade into insignificance. This sentiment is especially applicable to me and my apparatus, yet even Fer and Samluch understand that no task holds greater importance. Hence, it is not the act of joining forces with Zurvan that frustrates them, but rather his complete lack of seriousness.

Even if we disregard his numerous liberties, there is not even a modicum of desire to fulfill the mission successfully. For instance, when we arrived on this planet, Zurvan disregarded the use of feathers. When teleporting a group of individuals, it suffices for one person, typically the strongest member of the team—Zurvan, in this case—to utilize the feather

while the rest merely touch it. This responsibility usually falls upon the commanding officer, as it is illogical to waste the resources of subordinates. Yet, he neglected this duty despite having an abundance of feathers at his disposal.

Furthermore, it is likely that he intentionally aimed to rile us up. I have no inkling as to what motivates such behavior, but Zurvan seems to derive satisfaction from provoking the ire of his subordinates. As a result, I had to employ the feather upon his orders, yet the primary issue arose when he informed Samluch, who vehemently opposed the idea. His exact words were, "Weaklings like you are no longer good for anything anyway"... There is a limit to the degree of rudeness one can endure.

Calming down the fuming Samluch proved to be exceptionally challenging, and I struggle to contain my anger at the realization that Zurvan takes the phrase "things at hand" quite literally.

His complete disregard for cooperation is apparent. Magsarion may not be inclined towards teamwork either, but Zurvan actively undermines it. Furthermore, we remain ignorant of our mission's specifics. His Majesty merely instructed us to obey Zurvan, but he did not divulge any details, assuring us that everything would become clear once we arrived.

Reading his mind proved futile as well, for in all the years of my acquaintance with Zurvan, he has mastered the art of concealing his true thoughts. Even now, four carts behind us, he revels in carefree merriment, his mind occupied with utterly trivial matters. Thoughts of dalliances with a few women, to put it delicately.

While I am pleased that they are enjoying themselves, I must confess that a part of me yearns to send Zurvan to join the ranks of the forefathers. Magsarion has yet to finish restoring his feathers, and therefore, he will join us later. There is no doubt that his arrival will further complicate matters, making our already strained relationship even more challenging. Needless to say, this cannot be deemed a great success. However, we have reached the limit of our endurance.

"Gentlemen, we shall halt for dinner. There is a visible cave ahead, where we can seek refuge from the relentless wind," the coachman's voice interrupts our endless lamentations.

We shift our attention towards him, grateful for his guidance. Since Zurvan cannot be relied upon for such matters, we have had to rely on the wisdom of the locals, gathering information about the area. The powerful **daeva** and her minions who once ruled these lands incurred the wrath of the King of Evil and met her demise. As a result, a temporary respite settled upon this land. While it cannot be considered a fully restored world, it is a significant improvement from the previous state of affairs, and the people are utilizing this opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Naturally, they understand that a new **daeva** will eventually be appointed, but for now, they choose to live in the present. The caravan masters' words are brimming with optimism, yet

there lingers a faint shadow in their smiles, as if they feel remorseful or ashamed of what they have spoken.

These are the faces of individuals who fear embracing hope. The countenances of those who have believed in salvation time and time again, only to be betrayed. Their expressions carry a mix of sorrow and timidity. It is our duty, therefore, to demonstrate our miraculous abilities to them.

We must show them that it is too early to surrender—not through empty words, but through tangible actions. I wholeheartedly believe in this cause, with every fiber of my being.



It dawned on us, a glimmer of opportunity amidst the darkness. With one of the enemy leaders vanquished, we could strike through this breach and create a resounding impact.

"Fool, don't be so naive," retorted another.

"Even the entire Sacred Realm won't guarantee victory against Kaikhosru."

After our dinner, we gathered around the crackling fire, a short distance away from the caravan, to discuss our immediate future. Opinions were divided between the resolute Samluch and the cautious Fer, and I found myself somewhere in between. With the mission's vague instructions, it was perilous to recklessly set goals without sufficient knowledge. This logic was undeniably sound, given the numerous unanswered questions that lingered.

"Quinn, what do you think?" I was asked, breaking free from my contemplation.

"Let me ponder..." I began, acknowledging the validity of their arguments.

"First and foremost, you are correct. This is undoubtedly our chance, and we cannot afford to let it slip away. His Majesty must have sent us here precisely because he intends to exploit it."

"However," I continued, "Fer is also right in his caution, as much as it pains me to admit it. We are dealing with the King of Evil, particularly the Star Spirit. Perhaps he is not as formidable as my father, but he remains a foe with whom we cannot rely on chance alone."

"Exactly," affirmed Fer.

"His Majesty has already dealt with the Workshop of Annihilation, and his plans are far from naïve. To defeat the King of Evil with such a small force? It is no jest; it is simply impossible."

"Then what does he expect from us?" someone interjected.

"What can we do for the suffering locals? If not to slay the enemy leader, then what?"

"I can only speculate."

Fer, cornered by our inquiries, quickly lost his confidence, averted his gaze, and softly mumbled, "Perhaps we are here for interference or sabotage. To fortify positions so that the resulting breach remains unsealed, to be utilized in the future."

"So, we are meant to lay the groundwork? To become a wedge in this land ourselves?"

"At least that is my belief," Fer replied.

"Don't you agree, Quinn?"

"For the most part, I do."

It pertained to the composition of our group. None of us were inclined towards sabotage in the slightest.

"Since we cannot achieve victory through direct confrontation with Kaikhosru, it stands to reason that we should lay the foundation from the shadows," I explained.

"Ideally, the enemy should not detect any deviation from the norm. And if that is unattainable, we must maintain a position that leaves the enemy with a sense of unease, thinking that something is amiss. We should avoid drawing unnecessary attention."

I turned to Fer and asked, "What are your thoughts on the composition of our squad?"

Furrowing his brows, Fer fell silent, while Samluch stared into the void. It seemed we all pondered the same question.

"If it were just the three of us, we could attempt it," Samluch finally spoke, her voice filled with frustration.

"But Magsarion... he is incapable of such a task, I am certain. And Zurvan... he remains an insufferable fool."

Not to mention that this mission was initially entrusted to the two of them. I found myself perplexed. The circumstances unfolded as if we were assigned mundane fieldwork, yet the main characters were far from ordinary. I had no doubts about His Majesty's decision, but comprehending it remained elusive to someone like me.

"So, the only option is to persuade Zurvan to cooperate... What can I do? I will go to him..."

I contemplated intervening, glancing at Fer, but he shook his head silently. We had come this far, and perhaps it was necessary for them to quarrel openly, to release all their frustrations at once. Fer believed it was best for me to remain alert and watch the situation unfold. I began to pray silently, hoping that matters would not spiral out of control, when suddenly, the air filled with the sound of girlish voices.

"Hey, stop! Finally, Zurvan has arrived!"

Zurvan descended from the cart with an air of dignity, accompanied by five or six scantily clad dancers. His cheeks and chest bore the telltale marks of crimson lipstick. Fer clicked his tongue disapprovingly, I buried my face in my hands, and Samluch's anger surged.

"Oh, you despicable creature! I could kill you right now, seriously! And you, stop squirming, you worthless girls!"

The dancers shrieked and fled, their panicked voices echoing through the night. Zurvan, undeterred, chased after them, assuring them that everything was fine.

"He truly fashions himself as a tyrant sultan."

With Zurvan's arrival, any attempts by Samluch to communicate with him were futile. Ignoring the threats and outbursts, Zurvan turned to me, his wicked smile stretching across his face.

"You understand, don't you? That I am a man of refined taste."

I was taken aback. What was he talking about all of a sudden? I couldn't fathom his intentions, yet his mind was laid bare before me, revealing how he intended to use me.

"Tell them, both of them, at the same time. It's an order," Zurvan instructed, his voice dripping with mischief.

"Yes, but..." I hesitated, unwilling to offer an immediate response.

Zurvan was a peculiar individual, although not in the same sense as Magsarion. He possessed a distinct character, style, and, well, "distinctive feature." I was aware of it, but did I truly need to divulge it? Was I expected to utter those words? Samluch and Fer looked at me, perplexed, and I silently pleaded for their assistance, almost begging them to rescue me from this predicament.

I beg you, for heaven's sake, stop him. Say that you are indifferent to his nightly activity, let at least someone cancel this request. Protect me from this most vulgar, worst of men and change my priority.

"I repeat, this is an order."

However, my prayers remain unanswered, and I remain a toy in the evil hands of vice. I try to resist and look down to at least hide my face, and I speak in a voice that sounds like a mosquito squeak.

"Zurvan, well... he can't."

"What?"

"Quinn, what are you talking about? Explain."

Samluch and Fer lean forward with their whole body and tease me. Don't ask, don't demand anything from me. Don't act like it's some vital information, both of you. And now, for some reason, the caravaners also began to get closer ...

"I can't hear it, louder!"

All right, you're dead. You are dead, Zurvan.

"He does not get up! In that sense, he's good for nothing! Sexual relations, copulation, love pleasures, childbearing he can't do anything! He is a eternal virgin!"

Sharply, as if in spirit, I obey the order and lay out everything in such a way that even a complete fool would understand everything. I had to. Giggling dancers. Caravaners with pity in their eyes. What did I do to deserve such a fate? What have I done that was so unforgivable in the past? Is there really no justice in the world? No miracle? I feel like something very important inside me crumbles to dust.

"W-wait, if you know such things about him... "

"Not at all!"

Don't even think about it, Samluch. Don't blush, Fer. I swear, nothing connects me with this beast, he just constantly chats about all sorts of irrelevant things, and for our long acquaintance with him, sooner or later ... Stop, stop laughing, Zurvan!

"In general, such things. Since you now know that I am a supporter of platonic love, you can get to the point."

Zurvan takes off Samluch's hand, drives away curious onlookers and calls me with a frivolous whistle. We need to repay him at least once, on the verge of breaking the Commandment.

With these thoughts, I turn my gaze to him, when suddenly I notice that Zurvan's manners have changed at once. The sly smile has not gone away, but the sparkle in the eyes has become much more dangerous and colder; he almost feels the thirst for blood. He is oblivious to how he has confused me by the sudden change, and his mind informs me of the "case."

"Don't say a word. Kaikhosru sees and hears us all the time."

"A!.."

"Consider that the enemy knows everything that has happened since we came to this planet. We can't talk carelessly about everything."

I can only listen with barely concealed shock. We didn't think about it at all, and I'm acutely aware of what fools we've been. Our opponent is the Star Spirit, the sixth King of Evil. And this is his territory, the Corpse of the Star. We are like in his belly. There is no doubt that he immediately learns about any action of strangers in all details.

"This time the main role is assigned not to me and not to Magsarion. We must give support to the one who entered here five years ago. To be frank, we're performing a diversion." Zurvan continues without even giving a chance to recover from the previous shock.

I somehow switch my attention to the new message and think about its content. Support? And besides, a distraction? It turns out that we need to act as defiantly as possible so that the enemy does not notice this spy? As a sabotage that needs to support the main attack, our not a bit modest composition really looks reasonable, and one cannot but agree with such a choice. But can't Kaikhosru recognize this foreign object in the same way as he recognizes us? No matter how skilled this spy was, it's hard to imagine that he managed to avoid the dragon's eye of the King of Evil for five years in a row. However, my question was answered here.

"Alma got in here. You may be a rookie, but at least you've heard rumors about her."

Samluch and Fer do not hear the "voice", and therefore they look at me with a blank look, but they will have to wait, a little later I will explain everything to them. First I need to understand our position.

Alma... Zurvan is right, this name is familiar to me. This is the last of those five who experienced the defeat of twenty years ago and survived to this day. In addition, her military merits are not inferior to Magsarion or Zurvan. Perhaps the number of those killed by her is small, but all her victims were exceptionally large. Of all the **yazata** of the current Sacred Realm, she was the only one who had managed to defeat several rank one **daevas**.

"Alma will be the new concubine. She's been waiting for this opportunity all this time."

The owner of the ability that confuses the perception of good and evil by **Avesta**. The assassin, who summons a kind of man-made gate of fall, disguises herself as a **Drujvant** and penetrates the very womb of the **daevas**.

This is the **yazata** named Alma.

3

“Quinn, you take that cooking over there. And why are you standing like a pillar, Fer? Get those skinny guys over here.”

Clouds of steam drift across the city square as Samluch's voice rises above it. We learned the details of our assignment and in the evening of the next day we reached our destination. Arzang Crystal Palace... The only major city in these parts, after the overthrowing of the previous **daeva**, and became a literal oasis. In this regard, many poor **Ashavans** began to arrive here, covering the empty city without masters with a wave. ...Although no, it is obvious that this is not a capture, but only an appearance.



Of course, all migrants, without exception, have relief written on their faces, and they really get enough food to live tolerably on, but there is a shadow on everyone's smile. None of them are genuinely happy. Strong fear prevents them from feeling happy. When exactly will they lose it? When exactly will this time pass? They cannot get rid of the anxiety that has settled in their souls, and in each of them the fragility of a frightened little animal is felt. Even the city square, which is supposed to be a place of joyful bustle, seems somewhat gloomy.

People constantly push each other, but their energy is more like a funeral procession. Or maybe it's like they're going up the scaffold... Something like that.

"Oh, honestly, piss off. You lack courage! Okay, eat, eat more! Don't be shy, I'll forgive everyone!"

Samluch piles a mountain of food on the tray like the rudest waitress in the world. I play the role of a more diligent waitress, while Fer watches and manages the queue. Simply put, we help in the distribution of provisions, and now this is our main activity. Three days have passed since our arrival in Arzang, but no noticeable changes have occurred so far. We support all those who are crippled physically and morally, and spare no effort to lift their spirits a little. By the way, Zurvan is now probably carelessly drinking alcohol in the mansion, which he arbitrarily made his residence. He ordered us to do charity work, but he himself amuses himself.

Of course, I don't like it, it even makes me angry, but I think it's commendable that Samluch works hard, even if she mutters curses under her breath. One must learn from her and separate dissatisfaction with Zurvan from acts of mercy. Even if she separates it too diligently, more precisely, makes everything too similar to fun starts.

Perhaps, given our obligation to draw as much attention to ourselves as possible, this decision can be called the right one. Behind this restless whirlwind, time flies by unnoticed, and ...

"Okay, thank you all. Till tomorrow!"

Having finished distributing food for the day, we leave, waving to people who often bow to us. But, of course, we cannot immediately return to the base. From morning to evening we are mainly busy with the work of the locals, but we have another duty, which we take up as soon as the night shadows deepen. And this is the search and extermination of strangers.

"Well, maybe we can catch someone today?"

"You're talking, Fer. But are you sure you can do it? You are so skinny."

"No need for frivolity. I have served as a **yazata** much longer than you. In general, you will see everything yourself. We go around the night Arzang, exchanging these kind of brave phrases. However, this is only a game for the public, while we conduct a more meaningful dialogue in silent voices."

"So it will do, right? Boldly, like we don't understand anything."

"Stupid, there's no ulterior motives. You behave like this most of the time, so you don't have to think again."

"What-oh?!"

The “voice” of Samluch is heard in the head several times louder than usual. I lightly massage my temples, adjusting my sensitivity again and again.

“Please, control yourself. The stronger your emotions, the louder the voice of your consciousness, and your screams frighten me. From the outside, my reaction will look unnatural, right? Everything we do on this planet is seen and heard by Kaikhosru.”

Faced with this fact, we do our best to prevent information leakage. We conduct business negotiations only through telepathy, and in words we play simpletons who do not worry about possible danger. I have to admit that this performance has a slight hint of being a farce, but we didn’t think of other options, and this one works quite well anyway.

The transfer of information remains my basic function, which I perform regularly, but the mutual communication between all members of the squad is a completely different matter. In short, it is necessary to establish a telepathic connection between Samluch and Fer, between Fer and Zurvan, and so on.

Of course, this requires some effort, but as you can see from the current state of affairs, it is quite possible. We are interconnected by the feathers of Vohu Mana, which means that the main work on synchronization of consciousness has already been done. If you add my Commandment to this, one “Do” command is enough to achieve the desired result.

“Still, I don’t get it ... If we had a reason to keep our mouths shut, why not reveal it to us in advance?”

“Are you talking about this again? I’m telling you, you can’t expect any logic from Zurvan. He probably just wanted to see our confusion or something.”

Or maybe he didn’t want us to act suspiciously. It is possible that if we were told everything in the Sacred Realm, we would constantly overact with tension. Urgent, obligatory and imposed performance. If you put us in this position, we can play surprisingly well. Especially someone like Samluch, who always prefers to go ahead.

“I can hear everything, Quinn. Who are you calling a dumb boar?”

“Ah—?”

I turn around and meet the eyes of Samluch, who looks down at me unkindly. It looks like my “voice” leaked out and I even accidentally reacted to it, which makes the two of them start to want to tease me some more.

“You know, you always look so distant, but inside you seem to be constantly complaining about everyone? And how do you just not get tired?”

"She is generally a gloomy nature, basically. You could guess, after all, it's not just that she likes to eavesdrop on others in her free time."

"It's not like I did it because I like it..."

I'm used to reading other people's minds, but not to having my mind read. It makes me feel embarrassed to point this out so accurately. Due to the fact that I expanded the synchronization field, even insignificant noise begins to fall into it. It needs a little more tweaking.

"Come on, get out, somebody!"

"What, chickened out you bastards?"

As if chasing away my embarrassment with laughter, Samluch screams at the top of her voice. We follow her example and continue to walk around the streets, shouting all sorts of impertinence every now and then. Time passes, and at night we meet less and less people. The best time for a surprise attack by an assassin. However, even now the **Drujvants** are not seen or heard. All these three days we have been doing nothing but wasting our energy, and Samluch mentally spits.

"Somehow the result is zero. Did Kaikhosru notice us?"

"I'm sure he underestimates us. He probably only sees us as noisy rats."

"Perhaps. However, his personal visit would be very inappropriate."

"What, is it possible?"

"Most likely no."

The option of Kaikhosru appearing in person to kill us does not bode well for us other than absolute surrender, but Fer says we don't have to worry about that.

"From the data we have, Kaikhosru is a typical **Drujvant** king. He likes to get comfortable on his throne, but at the same time he is utterly lazy on his feet. Let the gardener work in the garden. Apparently, he believes that this is not the king's business."

I do not see any flaws in Fer's logic and answer him.

"On the other hand, our current situation is incredibly inconvenient, but in the opposite sense. Has Kaikhosru chosen to disregard us?" I ponder aloud, the frustration evident in my voice.

"He doesn't even want to send his henchmen here?"

"Yeah. I'm telling you, he underestimates us and hardly believes we can accomplish anything. For the **yazata**, this is a great shame... but the main problem lies in the fact that it makes it much more difficult for us to face Alma."

"Seriously? But then our entire plan will crumble!" Samluch exclaims, her disbelief mirroring my own.

She is absolutely right, and a tired sigh escapes my lips. A direct confrontation with Kaikhosru would undoubtedly result in our demise, but in that case, His Majesty would simply dispatch new **yazatas** to replace us. For us, it is the worst-case scenario, but for the Sacred Realm, it would not be a defeat. However, if we are left unnoticed and unconsidered as a significant threat, it will spell disaster for our entire plan.

The current situation stands as follows. We boldly act as protective citizens of Arzang, disguised as **yazatas**, and Kaikhosru views us as a nuisance. Then enters Alma, and we stage a fake fight where we pretend to be driven away. For her supposed merits, she is promoted to the role of a concubine. If Alma becomes the ruler of Arzang through this charade, she will undoubtedly be able to protect its inhabitants, if only briefly, from their impending doom. As we understand it, Kaikhosru despises wasted resources, which means that delaying their demise is within the realm of possibility.

In the meantime, we relocate to another city and create chaos there. The longer we manage to sustain this facade, the higher the chance that Alma, who has already dealt with us, will be summoned to handle the situation once again. Sooner or later, we will be defeated by her, and in doing so, we will somehow assist her ascent in the ranks. Eventually, Alma will become insignificant to the King of Evil, and she will have an opportunity to get close to Kaikhosru himself.

Finally, we can proceed with the act of assassination. We retrieve the stolen goods from the serpent's clutches and revive the former Dragon Star, thereby saving both the planet and its inhabitants. Of course, we understand that things will not progress so smoothly. There are several questionable aspects to our plan.

For instance, it may transpire that Alma will have to eliminate us in order to secure her promotion. Most likely, the three of us were sent here precisely for that reason. As Zurvan would say, we are "materials at hand," and though we do not intend to sacrifice our lives, we must be prepared to take such risks.

We must deceive the King of Evil, and I sense that each of us is determined to do so, fueled by our shared hatred. Even if we manage to vanquish Kaikhosru, we cannot expect to defeat the remaining Kings of Evil swiftly. Consequently, another entity will simply assume the position of the sixth King of Evil. However, this does not mean that our operation will be in vain. We hope that by overcoming one absolute evil, numerous new **yazatas** will come forth.

This phenomenon was observed during Varhran's time, and the unusually high number of **daevas** present now is likely a result of the devastation caused by the previous king. Thus, this is how our world operates.

When the balance shifts, so does the population. Most importantly, our triumph here will bring about an indescribable moral uplift. The moment I discovered that Alma was at the core of this operation, confidence in its success flooded over me. It is worth risking our lives, at the very least. Yet, I did not anticipate stumbling upon problems at the very first stage. Perhaps the previous concubine was executed after falling out of favor. It would be incredibly inconvenient if Kaikhosru were to alter his views on concubines' duties and decide against seeking a replacement.

In that case, he would not send anyone here, and the promotion of Alma, along with our activities, would be indefinitely postponed.

"But is this even possible? What chief of the **Daevas** would allow **Ashavans** to roam his city?"

"You misunderstand, Samluch. Kaikhosru will not permit the **Ashavans** to take charge of this city on their own. As a Star Spirit, he possesses the ability to wield the earthly gifts at will, and this may even render the local feudal lords obsolete. This is not incongruous with the laziness we discussed earlier. He simply possesses a different perspective on matters than we do. Such an individual will not tolerate autocracy out of benevolence. Naturally, he will not wield his sword on the battlefield like an ordinary soldier, nor will he partake in mundane governance. In this sense, Kaikhosru can indeed be characterized as indolent, yet he is not entirely inactive. The power of the sixth King of Evil is such that he can instigate natural disasters even while lounging on his throne."

"I suppose he doesn't need to lift a finger to keep his subordinates teetering between life and death, which he finds pleasurable."

"Well, what then? Are you saying that our efforts to protect everyone here are in vain? That he can simply annihilate the entire earth with a mere snap of his fingers, disregarding our presence?"

"In the worst-case scenario, that is indeed possible. However, I refuse to believe that our actions are futile. I wish to give them a new purpose..." I trail off, contemplating our next course of action.

It serves no purpose to challenge the heavens and end up soaked in our own futility. The inhabitants of the Corpse of the Dragon Star have likely experienced this sentiment for many years, which explains their forgotten smiles and shattered hearts.

"In the end, it all comes down to how Alma can truly earn her promotion. While she undoubtedly does everything in her power, relying solely on her allure would make us

appear pitiful. We need to find a way to assist her in gaining Kaikhosru's trust," I suggest, hoping for a solution.

"Why not simply create a disturbance? Why not take a few people from here to the Sacred Realm?"

"About that..." I pause, considering the ramifications of her suggestion.

Certainly, we can teleport the local residents to the Sacred Realm, masquerading them as **yazata** candidates. At the very least, we could relocate a hundred people or more. I understand Samluch's rationale, especially after witnessing the deplorable conditions they endure. Moreover, since in Kaikhosru's eyes the population is his possession, it could indeed serve as a potent provocation. At first glance, the idea holds merit. However, Fer and I know why it is unfeasible.

"And you think that whenever we please... I wish it were so, but unfortunately, that is not an option."

"The risk is far too great. The path to the Sacred Realm could be discovered."

The residents, born and raised on the Corpse of the Dragon Star, carry the scent of Kaikhosru within them. There is a possibility that he may trace their steps, and his majesty is unlikely to approve.

"In order to save the locals, we must first defeat Kaikhosru. It cannot be done in reverse," I explain, the weight of the truth heavy upon me.

"What a troublesome situation... It's both impossible and not possible!"

Abandoning her composure, Samluch irritably scratches the back of her head and clenches her teeth. The strain of the situation has clearly taken its toll on her, eroding her patience.

"Then maybe that one? Kill all the other concubines, and that's it! Can't you say that this doesn't work either? We were going to get rowdy anyway."

"Of course, if there are no other options, we will do so. If there are fewer outstanding fighters in the camp of the enemy, Alma will have more opportunities to prove herself and cross paths with us too... However, this is not so simple. All the concubines of Kaikhosru are **Daevas** of the first rank and above."

"In terms of?" Fer asks, momentarily surprised by the question before sighing picturesquely and casting a quick glance in my direction. His eyes seem to convey, "Come on, tell her the right way." And his voice echoes the sentiment in my mind.

"We assign ranks to **Daevas** based on their strength. In ascending order, they are: rank four, rank three, rank two, rank one, special rank, and finally, the Kings of Evil," I explain, hoping to shed light on the matter.

Given my Commandment, I cannot provide information unless asked directly, but I proceed with the explanation to avoid angering Fer.

"Rank four **Daevas** can be considered weak, rank three as normal, and rank two as strong. The **Daevas** we encountered in battle were around the second rank. The first rank is even stronger."

"What about Reilly? Such a monster, but still only the second rank?" Samluch questions, her brows furrowing as she recalls the events and absentmindedly rubs her prosthetic right hand.

Indeed, despite her imposing appearance, Reilly was only a second-rank **Daeva**.

"By the way, **Daevas** of a special rank are also known as candidates for the Kings of Evil. In simple terms, if the King of Evil is defeated, there is a high probability that one of them will take his place. Currently, there are four such **Daevas** known by the Sacred Realm. And one of them is Kaikhosru's senior concubine." I explain, referencing the Dragon Jewel Princess.

"Dragon Jewel Princess, if I'm not mistaken? We don't know her name, but it seems she has been associated with Kaikhosru even before he became the King of Evil. And besides her, there are sixteen **Daevas** of the first rank... It's not so easy to attack such individuals head-on."

Samluch realizes, the complexity of the situation sinking in. The original plan was for Alma to fight the concubines after becoming one herself. We would support her in the battles, at least in theory. However, the circumstances have changed, and it may fall upon us to fight the concubines without Alma's direct involvement. As Fer mentioned, if the need arises, we will be forced to do so, but it will undoubtedly be a challenging task. Yet, we cannot predict the future with certainty, and there may still be other options available to us.

For centuries, the history of the Sacred Realm has witnessed only a handful of **yazata** who have managed to vanquish a **daeva** of the first rank. Among those known to us, the notable names include Mr. Varhran and Mrs. Nahid.

Samluch's voice carried a tinge of sadness as she contemplated the matter. Her reaction surprised me, and Fer seemed equally taken aback, turning to her as if seeking reassurance.

"I'm even a little disappointed... You're someone I thought would either berate her out of stubbornness or sing her praises like a fool," Fer remarked, his words laced with a touch of jest.

Samluch, looking down at her feet, wore an unfamiliar expression. She continued speaking as if reflecting on her own thoughts.

"Deceiving the perception of the **Avesta** is a serious matter. It almost seems like a deception of one's own instincts, an ability that cannot be achieved without facing difficult conditions. I've been trying to decipher what kind of Commandment Alma might have made, but I couldn't come up with any answers. And it seems you are in the same predicament, right?" she asked, turning her attention toward me.

"Yes to my knowledge, none of the **yazatas** have been able to uncover the exact nature of Alma's Commandment."

Samluch's doubts and fears mirrored those of anyone who had heard the rumors surrounding Alma. The stricter the Commandment, the greater the power gained in return. It was clear that Alma's remarkable skills came at a tremendous risk. Considering her exceptional ability to not only disguise herself and excel in espionage but also to wield an unmatched proficiency in killing, it was no surprise. She achieved what ordinary assassins couldn't, striking enemies where they least expected. And undoubtedly, such power must come with great hardships. Was this the reason behind Samluch's inexplicable sympathy for Alma?

"Well, yes... It's not exactly sympathy, especially since it would be insulting to her. So, I suppose it's more of an understanding. Although I can't quite put it into words."

It seemed that Samluch, in her own way, refused to diminish the pain that Alma endured, even in a situation where she might be forced to kill us. Samluch found a kindred spirit in Alma, who embraced asceticism in a way that no one else would dare. The fact that Alma chose to spend her days amidst the **Drujvants** remained an enigma. From our perspective, it seemed like an undeniable humiliation, wading through a swamp of pus and filth. Yet, it was precisely this experience that sharpened her blade of exorcism to its finest edge.

"Regardless, judging by her accomplishments and her current position, it's evident that her abilities are designed for significant undertakings. His Majesty places unwavering trust in Alma," I stated, emphasizing the gravity of her power.

Indeed, her capabilities had the potential to kill even the King of Evil himself, transcending the boundaries of quantity and quality. Was it not akin to witnessing a miracle? Samluch turned her attention to me.

"Can you contact her, Quinn?"

"It's not a simple task, just like the time we couldn't find Magsarion because he was within a **daeva**."

I yearned to meet Alma, to uncover the truth about her. Once again, my determination swelled within me, fueling my resolve to ensure the success of our mission.

And just then...

"A!"

An electric shiver coursed through my body, causing me to come to a sudden halt. Samluch and Fer, caught off guard by my unexpected reaction, turned to face me.

"What happened? Is it an enemy?"

"If so, where? Speak, Quinn."

I took a moment to gather my thoughts before responding.

"Ah... That's..."

The revelation was so astonishing that I momentarily forgot to communicate telepathically. And perhaps it was for the best. This was news that needed to be shared aloud.

A guest had arrived in Arzang.

Not a daeva, not Alma, nor even Kaikhosru. Yet, in many ways, this individual was far more formidable than any of them.

"Magsarion has arrived. And his consciousness...?"

The image of the blood-soaked village of Reilly flashed vividly in my mind. The memory of that fateful day resurfaced, causing a chill to run down my spine.

"Perhaps he has come to spill the blood of the locals once again!"

From my exclamation, the faces of Samluch and Fer become numb. Of course, they also understand everything. To lure and kill the enemy, absolutely any means are good for Magsarion. Surely he decided to erect a mountain of corpses on this earth as a challenge to Kaikhosru:

"I'm going to destroy your wealth."

Cruelly, shamelessly, so thoroughly that the line between good and evil disappears. He must be stopped...

This time. I feel their agreement and direction, and we run through the darkness of Arzang.

4

In an instant, Magsarion materialized within the city, his teleportation guided by the meticulous record of our movements. Vohu Mana's decision, though seemingly logical and almost obvious, failed to align with the actual situation on the ground. It was akin to unleashing a famished beast into a barren field, devoid of any prey. Even without nearby adversaries to sink his claws into, Magsarion would press forward, even if it meant descending into cannibalism.

"Quinn, where is Magsarion now?"

With Magsarion having traced our footsteps, his location should be known to us. This meant we had the means to teleport directly to him.

"B-but..."

"No time for doubt, this is an order!"

A strong desire resonated within me, appealing to my very essence. Fer yearned for us to be there, protecting the locals against all odds. It was true that his honor was at stake, but in the grand scheme of things, it held a lower priority. The paramount importance lay in fulfilling His Majesty's decree and ensuring the successful completion of our mission. Squandering one of our precious feathers would not serve as the optimal solution, thus I could not yield to Fer's commands.

Furthermore, Magsarion's purported actions might indeed prove effective if one disregarded the ethical implications.

"Damn, is there no way to give in, even just once?" I exclaimed in frustration.

Fer, upon hearing my explanation, let out a mournful exhale. Meanwhile, Samluch observed him with surprise and a hint of admiration.

"I thought you were on Magsarion's side."

"What? What are you talking about? These are completely different things!" Fer retorted, his voice laced with anger, bewilderment, annoyance, and even embarrassment.

"I am not trying to deny Magsarion's methods or deny that, in some sense, he is right. Perhaps I even respect him for possessing a power we lack. But still..."

Yes, and yet. He fervently believed that his own sense of justice held paramount importance.

"There are heights to which I aspire. The image I wish to project, the victories I desire to achieve... In short, it's not such a difficult thing. I simply want to look cool!" Fer declared.

Forgetting the urgency of the situation for a moment, Samluch burst into laughter.

"So, that's it? You think stopping Magsarion here will make you look cool?"

"Why not?!"

Always engaged in arguments, making jokes, and snapping at others, Fer's essence was one of passion and utter simplicity. I genuinely believed Fer to be a remarkable young man.

"To protect the weak, I will send the strong to hell. Is that all I want? Any problems?"

"Ahaha!" Samluch's laughter filled the air as she playfully grabbed Fer's head while maintaining her running pace.

"No, no. Not bad at all. I like you, Fer.. You can marry me in ten years."

"Hey, ghah! Stop it! Let go, you fool! I'm telling you, I hate huge women!" Fer protested with exasperation. ...However, amidst the levity, no one would deter us from halting Magsarion's rampage.

Without the luxury of utilizing our feathers to pinpoint his location, teleportation to Magsarion remained our sole limitation. Just a few more minutes of running, and we would reach our destination. Whether we would arrive in time was uncertain, but we could only run and maintain our unwavering belief.

Regardless of the circumstances surrounding the salvation of this city, it must not descend into the abyss of despair once again. After all, it was precisely for this reason that we, the **yazata**, had come here.

Magsarion... Wasn't it a similar desire that initially drove your sword? I am still unsure of what you detest, what drives you to curse to the point of becoming what you are now. To be honest, I don't even know how I truly feel about the path you have chosen. Yet, I can say one thing with certainty: do not disregard us...

You have me. We stand by your side. You are not fighting alone. Asserting that you have no allies and bearing this burden in solitude is simply an act of cowardice. Don't you think it is misguided, Magsarion?

"Almost there... Just a little more," I whispered, a sliver of hope creeping into my voice.

We would make it in time... We would round the corner, covering the remaining hundred or two meters... I barely had time to reassure myself when, in an instant...

"What?!" I exclaimed, a deafening roar accompanying a beam of light that pierced the darkness, striking Magsarion directly.

Yet, he countered, cutting through the light with his sword, causing a flash that erased him from view. A second later, that same light illuminated the rooftop of one of the buildings. And then, silence ensued. None of us could have foreseen this turn of events. However, we all understood what had just transpired. Teleportation... Was that truly...?

"Zurvan? Why did this happen?" I questioned, seeking answers to the unexpected turn of events.

Zurvan had forcefully teleported Magsarion, following him to his destination. It was natural for the **yazata** to intervene and halt Magsarion's rampage, but this act did not align with Zurvan's usual behavior. Was he attempting to protect the civilians? Even at the cost of a few feathers? No matter how many questions swirled in our minds, we could only acknowledge the reality before us. Thanks to Zurvan, a tragedy had been averted, and Arzang now lay in a state of calm.

"Quinn, find those cretins. Inform us of their conversation"

"It's possible they have already turned on each other. If that's the case, we'll have to intervene, and it won't contradict His Royal Majesty's orders."

"Yes... That's true. Just hold on a moment."

Melancholy, apprehension, and an undeniable curiosity surged within me. I longed to know what awaited us, what Zurvan was about to reveal.



The tension in the cave hangs heavy as the two figures face off, illuminated only by the faint starlight.

I transmit all the information I gather to the consciousness of Samluch and Fer, and a sense of unease washes over me. The atmosphere is far from calm; it crackles with anticipation. Magsarion, his thwarted intentions evident, exudes a silent aura of bloodlust. It is clear that he is not merely a threat to be contained; he could strike at any moment, his sword ready to claim more lives. And yet, Zurvan, clad in sinister armor, meets Magsarion's gaze with a calm smile. He senses the bloodlust emanating from his opponent, but he does not consider himself in any danger. In fact, it almost seems as though Zurvan relishes the confrontation. Not only does he know that I am observing, but he maintains a playful demeanor that I find difficult to align with.

He carries himself with the air of a jester dancing on the edge of a knife, taunting fate itself.

"All you ever do is kill or practice your swings. You should learn to relax sometimes. I look at you, and my shoulders ache."

However, Magsarion remains unresponsive. An ordinary person might have given up and started drinking alone, but Zurvan's bravado remains unwavering. There is a swagger, even a sense of pride, in his demeanor. He pays no mind to the circumstances or the opinions of others; he simply behaves as he pleases. In that sense, perhaps he and Magsarion are kindred spirits.

"It's been ten years since we first met, right? Yet, I realize that I've never seen your face, Magsarion. Back then, even without your armor, you concealed your face. Why is that?" Zurvan continues, prodding at Magsarion's secrecy or perhaps his refusal to reveal himself.

If I may interject with my own opinion, I'm not certain Zurvan has the right to pry. Each **yazata**, including those of the **Ashavan**, shrouds their true face in mystery. It is not a matter to be taken lightly, and yet there is an unnatural quality to it. While the **yazata** stand united as a collective, the ones who have achieved the greatest martial prowess maintain a distance from the rest.

Each of them likely has their own circumstances, but it does strike me as peculiar. That is why it is crucial for me to listen to their conversation now. Even as Magsarion responds to Zurvan with wordless bloodlust...

"By the way, you've known her since childhood, right? Since we have this opportunity, I'll ask her myself. Did you wear a pot on your head even as a baby?"

Zurvan jabs, his taunts directed at Magsarion's enigmatic nature. If you ask me, it's not entirely within Zurvan's rights to question this. The Commandments, the **ashavans**, and even Alma's true face are all veiled in secrecy. The strongest warriors of the sacred realm hide their true selves. Perhaps each has their reasons, but it is not entirely strange. However, I must focus on what unfolds before me, on their conversation. In response to Zurvan's remarks, Magsarion lets out a short sigh and turns his back, signifying that he considers any further conversation a waste of time. It is clear what this means without the need for words. He intends to return to Arzang, and we cannot allow him to do so.

"Ah, hold on a moment. It won't be that easy for you to leave, Magsarion."

In his left hand, a gun materializes seemingly out of thin air. Until recently, it held a bottle; when did he retrieve the firearm? When did he even have the opportunity? Everything happens in a blur, too quick for even my senses to detect. The cocked pistol is now aimed directly at Magsarion's back.

"Apologies, but you'll have to keep me company. Or would you like to test who's faster?"

But this nonchalance cannot be trusted. The pistol trick was too calculated, and even when Magsarion was forcibly teleported here, Zurvan could sense the bloodlust. Unpredictable as the move was, his target was no easy mark. Perhaps he deduced that only by acting with full force could he achieve his goal, yet his behavior contradicts his true nature. For him, pulling the trigger is as ordinary as shaking hands. As for who is faster... based on what I've witnessed, my inclination is to believe that it is Zurvan.

Whether the outcome will be determined by a single attack remains uncertain, but it is safe to assume that the bullet will reach Magsarion before he can retaliate.

"What are you thinking?"

"It's too late for you, brother. Have I ever aided anyone without ulterior motives? No, it's more of a personal creed... or perhaps even a hobby."

I can sense the growing frustration from Samluch and Fer beside me. It is understandable. Even I am beginning to feel a strong irritation towards Zurvan. Saving the people of Arzang or fulfilling his duty as a **yazata** are not the reasons behind his intervention. He simply delights in disturbing others, deeming it nothing more than a hobby—a desire to mock people.

There were no other motivations at play, and yet, objectively speaking, we owed a debt to Zurvan. Hence, his demeanor irks me even more.

"Very well, let's indulge in some conversation. I believe it will be much more rewarding than killing small fry."

Perhaps the fact that he wields pistols is already peculiar enough. Historically, very few **yazata**, if any, have favored pistols as their primary weapon. The reasons are evident—they render power meaningless. To be sure, they are highly effective as weapons, but their distinguishing feature lies in their accessibility. Mastery of pistols is relatively simple, yet they possess extraordinary power. Moreover, their effectiveness in combat largely hinges on the weapon itself. The truth is that such power comes too easily, without the need for effort or time.

Power acquired effortlessly begins to erode the soul. Hence, pistols are subject to a conditional ban within the sacred realm. And it's not merely a matter of abstract notions concerning the soul—their unsuitability for **ashavans** is tangible. Both those aspiring to become stronger and those who have already achieved their strength through personal effort believe that pistols would hinder their growth, and history attests to this. Yet, Zurvan stands as an apparent exception.

I cannot say for certain how Magsarion perceives this, but now he is rendered helpless. The situation remains precarious, and it is unclear how much longer this delicate balance will hold. Until one of them seizes an opportunity. Or until someone else does. As we anxiously watch the events unfold, Magsarion addresses Zurvan in a calm tone, turning only his head

towards him. It is as if the frigid landscape of the Corpse of the Dragon Star is embodied in his demeanor, unstoppable like flowing lava.

"How far do you think the filth has spread in the seconds I waste on your babble?" Ma

"And so, should I let you go on a killing spree as quickly as possible? What makes you think your method is the best?" Zurvan scoffs, evidently refusing to acknowledge the horrors emanating from Magsarion.

"If you constantly pursue efficiency, you will never have the pleasure of enjoying the process. I believe it's better to wait a little longer."

At this point, even Samluch and Fer have lost their composure.

"This is beyond words. What absurdity is this? Enough, Quinn. Let's approach them," Samluch urges, her patience wearing thin.

"Wait. Magsarion has yet to make a move."

Fer's words ring true—equilibrium still holds. Zurvan contends that something more worthwhile awaits Magsarion than the mere slaughter of ordinary civilians. Even if his claim rests solely on unfounded intuition, he remains composed, devoid of any apparent rage.

"You still wish to create a commotion, as you please. Wait a little longer, and you'll have your opportunity," Zurvan suggests, his tone carefree and irresponsible.

The Magsarion I know would not only meet this suggestion with hostility—or disregard it entirely—but he continues to listen calmly to Zurvan. Does he truly trust this "instinct" to such an extent? Perhaps it is a mutual understanding forged through their long-standing partnership as **yazata**. Nonetheless, Magsarion's demeanor does not resemble that of someone placing trust in their partner; rather, it appears as though he is observing a natural phenomenon, devoid of personal attachment.

With a smirk playing on his lips, Zurvan responds to Magsarion's question, his voice carrying a whimsical tone.

"Where? In terms of existence, in terms of purpose, or perhaps in terms of origin? The possibilities are endless, my dear Magsarion. We come from the depths of chaos, from the fragments of shattered dreams, and from the uncharted territories of the human psyche."

His words hang in the air, mingling with the cold breeze that sweeps through the desolate landscape. There is a sense of mystery and intrigue in Zurvan's enigmatic response, as if he revels in the ambiguity of his own existence. Magsarion's gaze remains fixed on Zurvan, a mix of curiosity and wariness in his eyes. The conversation between the two **yazata** takes

on an ethereal quality, as if they are discussing matters that transcend mortal comprehension.

"Chaos, dreams, and the human psyche," Magsarion muses, his voice tinged with skepticism.

"Are these the realms from which you draw your power? Is this what fuels your insatiable appetite for chaos?"

Zurvan chuckles softly, the sound echoing through the barren landscape. "Power, my dear Magsarion, is merely a side effect. What truly fascinates me is the dance of entropy, the unraveling of order, and the unexpected twists and turns of existence. Chaos is the canvas upon which I paint my masterpiece, and the unpredictability of the human psyche is my muse."

His words resonate with a strange allure, as if inviting Magsarion, and perhaps even us, to glimpse into the depths of the unknown.

"You see, Magsarion, chaos is not something to be feared or suppressed. It is the raw energy of creation, the driving force behind evolution and change. In chaos, there is beauty, freedom, and endless possibilities. It is a realm where the conventional rules of order no longer hold sway."

Magsarion's expression remains stoic, his gaze unwavering.

"And what about the consequences of such chaos? The suffering it brings, the lives it disrupts?"

Zurvan's smile widens, a glint of mischief in his eyes.

"Ah, consequences. They are the spices that add flavor to the dish of existence. Suffering and disruption, they are but ripples in the grand tapestry of chaos. And amidst those ripples, new paths are forged, new potentials awakened."

Magsarion's features harden, his eyes narrowing.

"You speak of chaos as if it is a grand design, as if it serves a higher purpose. But chaos, by its very nature, is a force that rends and destroys. It is not something to be celebrated or romanticized."

Zurvan's smile fades slightly, replaced by a contemplative expression.

"You are right, Magsarion. Chaos is a double-edged sword, capable of both creation and destruction. It is up to us, as beings who possess the power to shape our reality, to navigate the currents of chaos with wisdom and discernment. And perhaps, in doing so, we can uncover the hidden harmony that lies beneath the surface."

The air hangs heavy with their words, a palpable tension intertwining with the whispers of the wind. In this desolate realm, where darkness and uncertainty reign, Magsarion and Zurvan continue their enigmatic conversation, their voices carrying the weight of the unknown. And as we listen, we are left with more questions than answers, drawn deeper into the mystique of their discourse.

He's already lowered the gun, but it looks like he's no longer needed. Zurvan's instincts convinced Magsarion for a time, and Magsarion found waiting to be a better plan. In this I agree with them, but if I was given an order, I must obey. At the very least, we should observe the course of events before they arrive, wait for the opportunity to support Alma and take advantage of it.

I do not know under what circumstances Zurvan tells us to act, but we will do everything to fulfill the desire of all **yazatas**. After all, whatever happens, whatever gets in our way, if we turn our backs on it, we will lose what is of the greatest value.

"I succumbed to your persuasion. Now answer, Zurvan."

As we renew our resolve, the two mavericks continue their strange conversation. In the same low, heavy voice, Magsarion asks his question.

"Where did you come from?"

"Hm?.."

These words turn out to be even more incomprehensible than Zurvan's speech, and I can only frown inquiringly. "Where"? In terms of? Questions in my head replace each other, however Zurvan only blurs his visage into a smirk...



"Eh, hey... Why did it suddenly stop?"

"Zurvan told you not to listen Quinn!"

Fer and Samluch express their discontent in unison as the conversation abruptly halts. I shake my head, equally intrigued by their discussion, but prioritizing our current situation. We had just vowed to fulfill our duties as **yazatas**, no matter the circumstances. While we must remain committed to our greater objective, we cannot ignore the imminent threat that lies before us.

"The enemy has arrived. Prepare for battle immediately."

Both Fer and Samluch understand the urgency and swiftly assess their surroundings, seeking answers from me.

"Where is he? How did he infiltrate?" Fer inquires, concern etched on his face.

"He's not far from the city gates, yet to breach them"

Although it may not have been his original intent, we must acknowledge the unfortunate timing he chose. Had we noticed him a little later, we might have walked into an ambush.

"Then let's go. We'll meet him head-on. No need to hold back."

We nod in agreement, understanding that this enemy is calculating and methodical. He prepares for a formidable confrontation while adhering to his own meticulously devised plan. The **Drujvants'** contempt is both their strength and their weakness. If it helps us minimize collateral damage among the innocent, then we have no cause for complaint.

We take flight, soaring through the air with the wind as our ally, swiftly reaching the gates of Arzang without pause. We land upon the rough pebbles outside the city, assuming combat stances as our eyes fixate ahead. Standing roughly twenty meters from us is the enemy, seemingly detached and indifferent.

"What is that?" Samluch exclaims, her voice filled with astonishment.

Her reaction is shared by Fer and me, each of us recoiling in disgust and silently reproaching the celestial powers for allowing this abomination to exist.

"Did Zurvan punish her by granting this repulsive appearance?" Fer wonders aloud, contemplating whether this creature is the former concubine.

She ponders if this grotesque figure seeks retribution, only to return to this place once her desires are sated, bathing in the blood of innocents.

"Seems like it."

We are resolved to defeat her at any cost. This enemy, with her twisted form and repugnant story, is unlike anything we have encountered before. It is clear that she did not come into existence in this abhorrent state. The unspeakable torment and punishment he endured are evident, rendering her appearance unbearable to witness.

"If I had to guess, the former rulers of this city must have incurred Kaikhosru's wrath."

"And she was the one meting out the punishment."

So this enemy arrived here seeking redemption. But will her absolution come at the expense of innocent lives?

"Kh!"

I grind my teeth involuntarily, consumed by an overwhelming surge of hatred. This embodiment of madness is to be defeated here and now. Hatred boils within me, yet I strive to maintain composure as I observe our adversary. While her grotesque visage is repulsive, there remains a nagging unease that haunts me. Despite her frail appearance, there is something that unsettles me. Samluch's astute observation echoes my thoughts.

"She's a **Drujvant**, undoubtedly, but she seems so feeble. Almost frail, wouldn't you say?"

She is right. Even as a former rank one **daeva**, she should possess far greater power. This humanoid figure before us is undeniably repulsive, her deformity defying description, but she lacks the presence and strength we would expect. Nonetheless, a sense of caution lingers, tying us down despite the passing seconds. Ten seconds, then twenty...

"Ah!"

A sharp cry breaks the silence, jolting us from our fixation. I turn to see a young girl frozen in fear, realizing that we had become so engrossed in our enemy that we neglected our surroundings. It is a grave mistake, as she now stands vulnerable to harm.

"You fool, Quinn! Look ahead!" Fer chastises, his tone laced with urgency.

I am momentarily stunned by the unexpected turn of events, and before I can react, a menacing gust of wind hurtles towards us. But I am saved in the nick of time, forcefully pulled back and thrown to the ground.

"Kh-kh-kh!.."

I hear the strained gasps of the creature as it passes overhead, the sheer power enough to sever hair and skin. The one who came to my rescue, gripping me firmly by the scruff of my neck, is Samluch.

"Thank you, Samluch. I owe you one."

What could have frightened such a valiant warrior? The answer soon presents itself.

"Beast... Look at what he concealed," Samluch murmurs, her voice trembling. I direct my gaze ahead, and my heart skips a beat.

The creature standing before us, repulsive in its human form, holds something in its hands.

"A scythe..." I breathe, my voice barely a whisper.

The weapon dwarfs its wielder, its size far beyond what one would consider ordinary. Crafted for mundane labor, its design lacks any remarkable features. Yet, there is an eerie aura emanating from it, something that transcends its simple construction. The scythe reeks of blood—a dense miasma of death. Its essence, a symphony of endless killings, resonates with madness. Each swing and strike perpetuate an endless cycle of murder, murder, murder... It is a weapon of ruthless execution. My sanity teeters on the edge as I gaze upon this ordinary tool that should have long succumbed to the harshest treatment. Instead, it becomes a conduit for tragedy, warping the very fabric of space around it. I have never encountered something so deserving of the label "formidable weapon."

Even with my knowledge of my father's creations, an irresistible urge to flee grips me when faced with this scythe of death. In its own right, it has become a **daeva**—a savage monster that transcends reason and life, housing within it a never-ending career of slaughter.

"Ah, bo-oh..."

The human-shaped abomination emits another agonized groan. Its body writhes and contorts, resembling a grotesque creature squirming in a swamp. Despite its torn arm and wounded lower back, it continues its relentless advance, leaving a trail of bloodstains in the sand. Samluch and I suppress our revulsion, taking a step back simultaneously.

"It seems that she is not used to swinging it at all," I observe, my voice laced with concern.

"Yes... I guess if we can dodge a few more times, it will destroy itself." The option to let our enemy swing the scythe may have its merits, but there are two significant drawbacks. We were fortunate that the recent blade of wind went upward; otherwise, it could have harmed Arzang. Despite the enemy's concern for Kaikhosru's opinion, her inability to handle the weapon poses an unpredictable risk. While she won't be able to swing it more than two or three times, maybe four at most, I can't help but question if it's worth allowing her to unleash the scythe as much as she pleases.

But the most crucial factor is our ability to dodge safely. The swings are prolonged, and the trajectory of the attacks is simple, yet the scythe instills an overwhelming sense of horror. Even now, my legs can barely support me. The noxious stench of blood hangs in the air, so thick that enduring it threatens to shatter me into pieces. The countless cries and curses emanating from it repeatedly forewarn me of an impending and inevitable death.

"A-A, it hurts... it hurts, it hurts... help, gita, HELP..." fragments of a desperate cry for help escape, and Samluch, her face contorted with rage, takes a step forward. The horror that once gripped her fades into righteous anger, and she raises her voice in a scream.

"How many did you kill while they were sobbing? There is no forgiveness for you, I will give them some peace by fucking destroying you!"

"That's it," Fer interjects, stepping forward as well.

He had covered the young girl during the chaos and now stands in front of her, while she remains on the ground.

"Quinn, Samluch. Let me handle this alone."

Samluch, taken aback by his words, can hardly believe her ears. Fer merely grins at her reaction, displaying absolute calmness.

"No need to worry. Today is a good day. Hey, Quinn..." Fer's nonchalant remark hangs in the air as he approaches the human-shaped abomination.

His face appears pale, clearly aware of the threat posed by the scythe, yet he does not hesitate in the slightest. It is self-confidence, a profound faith in his own inevitable victory. Understanding the cause behind it, I address Samluch directly, dispelling her confusion.

"Let's leave it to him. Everything will be fine."

I was aware of Fer's abilities, but their extent intrigued me. However, if he claims he can handle the situation, then there should be no cause for concern. Though harnessing such power proves challenging, I have witnessed firsthand the remarkable results it can yield when employed correctly.

"I believe Fer is now stronger than any of the **yazatas**," I state confidently.

As soon as the words leave my lips, a roar pierces the air—the unmistakable sound of torn wind.

"Oh!" I exclaim, watching as clouds of dust billow from Fer's previous location.

It is evident that his movement has reached a level comparable to lightning. Today proves to be a day of extraordinary swiftness.

"Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah..." the mock human's scream resounds.

Both of her arms have already been severed, and without his formidable scythe, he remains suspended in the air. Fer, on the other hand, has swiftly moved hundreds of meters away from his previous position. His movement is instantaneous—or rather, faster than an instant. It transcends the speed of sound by dozens of times, and there is still room to surpass that limit.

"What is that thing? Feathers he employed..."

"No, Fer hasn't employed feathers. This is his own unique ability, allowing him to move unhindered at such extraordinary speeds."

Magsarion's approach to achieving extraordinary power involves utilizing buffs and glitches, but his methods are intentionally crude. As a result, he must endure the influence of the laws of physics. Just as we unwittingly became victims of his attacks, reckless high-speed movement prompts a corresponding vibrational response. The force is so potent that when applied to the ground, it can obliterate everything in its vicinity. Even Magsarion himself would be reduced to fragments if not for his armor. However, Fer remains unaffected by such limitations.

"While I don't possess the exact details, it seems to involve some form of shapeshifting. He transforms into a state that allows him to move at such incredible speeds without any hindrance. His movements cover distances in ways that are normally impossible—precise, clean, and straight, minimizing unnecessary destruction."

Perhaps Fer himself would describe it as the epitome of coolness he aspires to achieve. And his ideal extends beyond speed alone.

"In total, he possesses seven abilities, each with different effects. He cannot use them at will, as there are unfortunate consequences. Nonetheless..."

I shift my gaze back to Fer, who is now sheathing his rapier at his hip, preparing for the final blow.

"No, it hurts, help HELP..." the still-sobbing human-shaped abomination pleads, but Fer leaps toward her, and another roar follows shortly after.

"That's the extent of what he's capable of when luck is on his side," I remark, awestruck. "How can I even put it into words..."

Samluch stands there with her mouth agape, observing as the enemy is sliced apart—or rather, transformed into a mass of minced meat. Fer dubs these abilities the "seven luminaries," a reflection of the calendar system in his homeland.

For seven days, he gains different abilities, and then the cycle repeats. Each ability is named after one of the Star Spirits near his homeland, and they correspond to those bodies in some manner. Although I don't know all seven, I believe the planet of water aligns with his incredible speed... if memory serves me right. Of course, in the Sacred Realm or on the Corpse of the Dragon Star, the calendars differ, with day and night following their own distinct patterns, and the length of the day varying. Therefore, Fer always carries a special watch, ensuring he acts with a clear understanding of the current day.

A restriction limits him from using more than one sealed ability per day. Nonetheless, thanks to this limitation, he possesses seven astonishing abilities, each usable once every seven days.

"It's a shame we weren't able to witness it earlier, but credit must be given where it's due."

"Indeed."

Instead of turning towards us with a smug smirk, Fer suddenly sprints in the opposite direction.

"Ah, right, I almost forgot. Come on, Quinn," Samluch calls out, directing me to where Marika, the young girl, sits wide-eyed. Fer kneels before her, excitement lacing his voice.

"How are you? Are you okay? Does anything hurt?" Fer asks, genuine concern evident in his voice.

"Oh, no. Thank you, I'm fine," Marika responds, shaking her head and arms in an embarrassed manner.

Suddenly, her stomach emits a loud growl, drawing everyone's attention, yet it manages to be utterly endearing. Fer's eyes widen, and Samluch bursts into laughter.

"Ha ha ha! Seems like everyone here is hungry. Look at how loudly your stomach growled!"

"Um... Samluch, could you be a bit more delicate? After all, she's a lady," I remark, trying to preserve some semblance of decorum.

"Huh? What are you talking about? I'm actually a woman too."

"You're more of a tomboy," I quip.

"What did you say? Say it again!"

Observing this spirited exchange, Marika smiles, a mixture of surprise, awkwardness, and amusement playing across her face.

"You all are funny," she remarks, appreciating our camaraderie.

"Perhaps it's the confidence we have in each other as comrades," I suggest, helping Marika to her feet and brushing off the dust.

I hope to reunite her with her family, who were lost in the sandstorm, but for now, we can't leave the city. Our only option is to trust that Marika's family arrives safely in Arzang.

"Excuse me, Quinn?" Marika looks at me quizzically, and I gently stroke her head, offering a soft smile.

"Yes?"

Fer suddenly interrupts, his voice filled with curiosity, "What happened to the scythe? We can't afford to overlook such an ominous and formidable weapon."

"Don't know. I wanted to try to break it, but it disappeared into nothing.

"..."

Yes, I saw it clearly too. If Fer saw it as well, then it was not an optical illusion.

"If you think about it, it must have been Kaikhosru's treasure. He lent it to an assistant, and then took it away so as not to lose it. That's all."

"I think so too. Still no other options come to mind."

"... And the truth."

Every time I catch myself in this bad habit. If I think too hard about the back of the back, I just look at the front and waste my time. I remind myself to keep myself under control, and then I'm about to leave, when suddenly Marika's stomach growls again this time even louder.

"S-sorry, I didn't mean to rush you!"

Samluch laughs out loud again. This time, even Fer is smirking awkwardly. Of course, I also smile warmly at her.

"It's Ok. Well, let's go."

We successfully defeated the enemy and saved the girl. For one night the result is more than worthy. The most important thing is to continue in the same spirit tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and henceforth, performing one glorious deed after another. I believe with all my heart that this is what a miracle is made of.

5

In the opulent golden bathroom, the radiant glow is so intense that it hurts the eyes. A young girl stands amidst the luxurious space, enveloped in the scent of pink incense. Her slender figure is poised, and she diligently cleanses herself, fully immersed in the task at hand. Little does she know that several "dragons" are silently observing her every move.

Whispering female voices fill the air; their words a blend of charm and seduction. They praise her beauty, her youth, and her vibrant aura. Their words are like petals of a flower, enticing and captivating. The chorus of voices resonates with a sweetness that can cloud one's consciousness and melt the mind. It is a symphony one could imagine the heavenly goddesses using to invite others to indulge in their decadence.

"You're still so young."

"How enviable."

"Every part of you exudes life."

"You shine with brilliance."

"We will surely become friends."

"Without a doubt."

Each voice showers her with happiness and benevolence, yet none of them truly sing from the heart.

"Welcome."

"Welcome."

"Join us, dear sister."

"Now, we are your family."

"We will be together forever."

"We have been awaiting your arrival, exquisite creature."

Amidst the repeated praises, silent implications lurk in the background. They imply that she is the most beautiful creature "after them." They greet her as an inferior being, suggesting that if she were to bow before them, they would get along splendidly. All sixteen girls share the same thoughts, unapologetically expressed.

Everything left unsaid is implied, for they consider themselves paragons of beauty. In their perception of the world, their lofty status equates to the will of the heavens. They do not need to discuss it overtly; instead, they shower her with admiration, sympathy, and even kindness. This warm welcome, tinged with a perverted attachment, resembles the joy of insects drowning in honey. There is a touch of repulsion in their overwhelming hospitality, but their guest remains unfazed.

She maintains her composure, focused solely on cleanliness.



The praise and contempt of those who call themselves her sisters hold no sway over her. It is merely a customary element of their etiquette, and she accepts their criticism with calm indifference.

The only thing that matters is fulfilling her purpose and doing everything within her power to achieve her goal.



And so, she diligently attends to herself, meticulously polishing her body, her strongest weapon. She tempers herself, honing her form to the level of steel, ensuring it is recognized as a masterpiece. Her dark skin glistens with a lustrous sheen, stretched over toned muscles that retain feminine softness. The curves of her buttocks seamlessly blend into her hips, and her ample bosom exudes a captivating allure that teeters on the edge of vulgarity.

If a woman's status were considered a craft, her body would be hailed as the most exquisite tool ever created for her. The radiance she emits is enough to ignite desire in any man, not driven by lust but by sheer admiration. Perhaps that is the essence of her purpose. As she finishes wiping herself, she meticulously inspects her reflection, just like a meticulous blacksmith searching for the slightest flaws in their work. Throughout this time, the female voices continue to resonate, but she allows them to flow past her ears. Yet, the last words they uttered in unison seem to have had a different effect.

"I'm sure Kaikhosru will also be pleased."

... Her hands, which had been tirelessly moving, come to a halt. Framed by cascading silver hair that contrasts exquisitely with her skin, her jet-like eyes scan the deserted bathroom. Then, with utmost politeness, she addresses the silent observers.

"It would be an indescribable honor for me. However, due to my limited perspective, I must admit to feeling some trepidation. Allow me to pose a question, venerable sisters. Will the lady of the Dragon Jewel grace us with her presence?"

"The elder sister is occupied."

"She has no time for the youngest sister."

"Are you suggesting you want to meet her?"

"You may find it difficult."

"Even we have not seen her face-to-face in a long time."

Each stone dragon, carved from its own unique gem - diamond, ruby, sapphire, emerald, aquamarine, topaz, heliotrope, lapis lazuli, pearl, moonstone, garnet, jade, amber, coral, agate, obsidian - represents one of the concubines of the sixth King of Evil. Yet, despite the expected number of eighteen, two of them are absent. Even accounting for the vacant place of the crystal princess, the Dragon Jewel princess remains, occupying the highest position.

"How long has it been since we last saw each other?"

"Who can say?"

"Who can say?"

Is she even present on this planet? In response to the query, the sisters' voices take on a stern tone.

"Why do you need to know?"

"Do not be presumptuous, Alma."

"Know your place, Alma."

To them, she is merely an unintelligent younger sister attempting to curry favor with the elder concubine, bypassing the others. Perhaps that is how they perceive her. Forced to acknowledge her mistake, Alma, the **Drujvant yazata**, immediately falls to her knees and bows her head.

"Your only concern should be pleasing your king."

"Indeed. I offer my sincere apologies, dear sisters."

Alma, an **ashavan** and one of the strongest **yazatas**, bows before the **daevas**. Though such behavior would be unimaginably humiliating considering her essence, she feels no shame. None of them hold any sway over her. Even if they each pose a deadly threat, they are ultimately distant servants. Let them bark amongst themselves in their quest for recognition, drowning thoughtlessly in their indulgences. Now, she must fulfill her duty.

"Do not disgrace yourself."

"We place our trust in you, Alma."

She will show them more. With unwavering determination to kill, Alma wipes away any traces of vulnerability, envelops herself in scented oils, adorns a weightless robe, and steps out of the bathroom.

Her battlefield awaits her—the place where men reveal their fatal fragility. And she will strike. With a smile that hints at a spider's cunning, she embraces her sharpened resolve to kill.

"Hmm, clearly. And you are beautiful."

Lying on a pile of precious metals, all of whom he managed to "transform" so far, the King of Evil Kaikhosru grins like a savage predator finally getting ahold of its prey. Perhaps this should be called imposing beauty.

With his masculinely solid and rough appearance, he is able to capture the soul of any woman. Making them fall to their knees, grabbing onto him, begging him to lust after them—his entire body exudes the power of enchantment.

His beauty is enough that even Alma, who has steely self-control, begins to feel as if in a fog. Even surrounded by many sparkling gems, it seems that he deserves much more colorful jewelry. It is this greatness, in which contempt is not felt even when he behaves more greedily than anyone, can be called the true nature of the serpent.



"I'm glad you know how to present yourself. It takes your natural beauty to the next level. I will take this as a sign of loyalty to me."

"You flatter me, my king."

In the moment when Alma modestly looks away in a bow, she manages to think over her strategy. He must not be allowed to take the initiative in his own hands. Ultimately, to kill the King of Evil, she will have to act freely, but now the main thing is to flirt with him, according to her own will. If she lets him taunt her and possess her without any resistance, the "efficiency" will drop.

But the most dangerous thing is his dragon face. You need to look at him as little as possible, which means she need to create conditions under which she will be forgiven for this.

With these thoughts, Alma raises her head, looks up at him and opens her mouth with a squint, paying special attention to the seductive movements of her tongue.

"However, does it follow from your words that in a woman you are only interested in appearance? Are you not attracted to ugliness?"

The reaction to her words was unexpected. The King of Evil looks at her for a moment, dumbfounded, and then breaks into a wide and innocent smile.

"Don't get me wrong, I'm not looking for faults in you. Everything in the world deserves my love according to its value. I will not waste my treasures, even if they look ugly."

"And even if they are unsightly inside?"

"Of course. Beautiful appearance and ugly inside. Ugly appearance and beautiful inside. Even perfect beauty and perfect ugliness. It all sparkles equally, everything has value. I don't care what kind of poison you keep in you. I will love it and own it."

"If so..." Alma whispers, taking a step forward.

"Would you like to plunge into my poison? I wish to enjoy your skills."

"Fuha!"

Kaikhosru finally laughs out loud. His shoulders shake with joy to meet such a greedy woman, but the meaning of what was said still needs to be clarified.

"Do you want to tell me to put out the light?"

"Judging by your temperament, you hear such a proposal infrequently."

"Hmm, that's true."

Kaikhosru thinks, rubbing his chin. Apparently, he does not at all consider himself above women's whims.

"But alas. After all, this is our first night, it will be boring in the dark. What an innocent decision. You are not a young princess."

With these words, Alma puts his knee on the bed of Kaikhosru. Maintaining her lioness posture, she mounts the dragon king and lets out a sigh. The two silhouettes are superimposed on each other. An ear-tickling caress is enough to light a fire in any man.

"Use your fangs... and feel me."

As those fateful words are spoken, the room plunges into darkness. The air crackles with tension. Sensuality and pleasure, determination and bloodlust are all present in equal measure, coalescing into a maelstrom of raw power.

The golden dragon, its scales glinting in the dim light, moves with a fluid grace that belies its size. It focuses its attention on a figure that stands before it, a woman of unimaginable beauty, a perfect specimen that the world has never seen before. With a ferocity that borders on madness, the dragon wraps its rings around her, determined to melt and devour her. But the woman, Alma, is not one to be underestimated.

She meets the dragon's gaze with a fierce determination, her eyes flashing with a primal energy that belies her delicate appearance. At first, the dragon follows her lead, tasting her and crawling around her with an almost reverential awe. Yet even as the dragon continues to explore her curves and contours, Alma raises her voice in a throaty moan, her body responding to the dragon's touch in ways that she never thought possible. The air is thick with the heat of their passion, a lustful essence that permeates every inch of the space they occupy.

As she lies there, consumed by waves of indescribable pleasure, it feels as though she is being lifted to transcendent realms, soaring high above the mortal plane. But even as she ascends, she can feel herself being pulled down, down into the depths of an abyss of ecstasy that exceeds all human understanding. It is as if an indomitable storm rages within her, a tempest that threatens to consume her entirely. And yet, she knew that this was no mere mortal that shared her bed.

This was an entity of cosmic proportions, a being of unsurpassed power and will. One of the seven greatest beings in the universe, before whom any individual ego was as insignificant as a grain of sand in the vastness of the ocean.

Despite this realization, Alma refuses to let go. She puts her entire being on the line, giving herself over completely to the will of this King of Evil. For she knows that **Ashavans** are those who dare to transcend all reasonable limits for the sake of others, for the greater good.

And so, with a fierce determination burning within her, she goes on the attack, caressing the scales of this monstrous entity, playing with its mane as if piercing it through and through.

"Not bad. Only such women deserve a place among my concubines. Scratch my tongue all you want."

Continuing to burn in the flame of unconsciousness, hotter than hellish hell, Alma wraps her arms around Kaikhosru's neck. She rolls her eyes and calls out to him hoarsely.

"It's too little. Hurry, stronger, give yourself to me."

A little more, and they will merge together, completing the preparation of her deadly SpandAlmad. This is the last female flesh that you will taste in your life. Enjoy it until only small pieces of you are left.

When Alma finally feels that the king of evil himself is entering her, she becomes confident in her victory. But at this very moment...

“By the way, did the men of the Sacred Realm sleep with you?”

“...Khh!”

Her whole body seems to freeze, and her mind is filled with emptiness.

What did he say? That this man just...

“No, apparently you can't. Such is your **Commandment**. Here it is... I can't even believe it”.

“Bastard!”

He already opened it. How long ago? Is it from the very beginning? Realizing her own failure, Alma tries to jump back, but Kaikhosru grabs her arm. And still she stops any attempts to hug her.

As the king of evil strokes Alma's hair, he continues to speak even with some tension in his voice.

“Join me. No one can love your radiance but me.”

“What nonsense!”

No matter how much she tried to escape, it was to no avail. So strongly, so tenderly, Kaikhosru's hand is wrapped around Alma, not letting go.



“I do not demand from you unconditional fidelity. If you really want to kill me, then do it, Alma. The truth is, you won’t be able to do it right now.”

The **Drujvant** king speaks about love with an **Ashavan** woman. An anomalous situation in which he courageously offers her even his own life. Is he neglecting the **Avesta**?

She cannot believe how calmly Kaikhosru tramples on the universal law, showing neither pain nor doubt. She simply does not find words for such inexplicable behavior.

“You’re not in love with me. Sleeping with such a woman is simply boring, and in general, as long as you don’t love me, you won’t kill me. Isn’t that how your **Commandment** is made? The more immoral the union, the deeper you strike.”

She has nothing to say. That a great reward comes with a great price is true not only in the case of the **Commandment** of Alma. In order to kill the King of Evil, it is not enough just to suppress her disgust. Do I really need to love him with all my heart? However, even if this is true, this is simply...

"...Impossible. Where did you get it? Who told you?"

"Don't be a prisoner of worthless truth. I ask what you want to do."

In that moment, Kaikhosru's grin grew unkind, his eyes filled with a sinister gleam. With each word he uttered, he struck Alma in her most vulnerable spot, causing her to falter.

"It's all the same, because the one you love does not reciprocate?"

His voice dripped with mockery and a tinge of cruelty, as if savoring her emotional turmoil. Alma's breath hitched, a sharp intake of air escaping her lips. The words pierced through her defenses, striking at the core of her deepest desires and unspoken fears.

She had hoped to conceal her love, to bury it beneath the weight of her duty. But now, faced with Kaikhosru's taunting, she could no longer deny the painful truth.

"...Kh!"

Her voice trembled, a mix of anguish and frustration. She struggled to find her footing, her thoughts swirling in a tumultuous whirlwind of emotions.

"And it suits you? Doesn't that make you angry?"

Kaikhosru's voice dripped with a twisted amusement. He relished in her vulnerability, seizing the opportunity to twist the knife further.

"I won't forgive myself if I let a fine woman like you rot."

The hegemony of the dragon emanated from him, a palpable aura of dominance and possessiveness. He regarded her as nothing less than his rightful treasure, a possession to be claimed and coveted. His greed knew no bounds, ready to defy even the laws of the universe itself. With audacity and arrogance,

Kaikhosru proclaimed the appointment of a new concubine, claiming Alma as his own. The weight of his words hung heavy in the air, enveloping her in an inescapable web of power and desire.

"You belong to me, Alma," he declared, his voice resonating with a commanding tone.

"Love me and let my color color you."

Chapter 4: Feast of the Man Murdering Demons - Translated by @ashmxt.t

1

A man strolls through a garden adorned with the fresh allure of morning. He appears to be around thirty, possessing a well-maintained physique devoid of any notable imperfections, complemented by pleasant features. While he exudes an air of strictness, it does not overshadow those around him. Instead, it places him among the rare breed of individuals who find true value in such precision—a steward serving a noble family.

Every step he takes and every posture he assumes is meticulously calculated, leaving no room for the slightest flaw. If there is anything about his appearance that raises questions, it is his choice of attire.

Clad in a sophisticated and elegant suit, complete with a tailcoat and a black tie typically reserved for gala evenings, he challenges the boundaries of conventional taste. However, for some inexplicable reason, it seems fitting on him, and thus, not overly conspicuous. In fact, he may consider such attire most appropriate for himself.



He perceives himself as a creature of the night, his habitat consisting of balls and concerts that seamlessly transition into funerals. From this perspective, one begins to notice deviations that set apart the fragrant blooms within this garden—a hint of thorns on the stems, traces of poison on the leaves, omens of ill fate, symbols of tragedy. Each flower captivates with its unique beauty, yet not a single plant escapes the sinister or vile essence that permeates this garden.

These flowers are **Drujvants**. Only the flowers of evil bloom in this garden, their inhabitants embodying a disposition and way of life that repudiate any notion of goodness. It is known as the Garden of Bloodshed, the domain of murderers.

"Elnaz," the man calls out in a low yet distinct voice.

The maid, who had just tended to the flowers, turns around with a carefree smile, clutching a spatula shaped like a frilly strawberry.

"Good morning, Mr. Montserrat. Isn't the weather splendid today?"

"Yes, an exceptionally fresh morning... By the way, what were you just concealing?"

"Ah..."

Elnaz suddenly finds herself at a loss for words. Keeping her right hand concealed behind her back, she desperately feigns ignorance of the question, yet her shifting gaze betrays her intentions. Montserrat, who also bears the responsibility of supervising the maids, silently observes her. Having already posed his query, he deems it unnecessary to repeat it. The silence becomes increasingly unbearable until Elnaz eventually surrenders, meekly extending her right hand forward.

"I was about to fertilize the flowers..."

Before them lies a human hand severed at the elbow, its small size suggesting it belonged to a child. Despite being severed, it continues to twitch, a testament to its fresh state.

"You don't mind, do you? Farangis and Shirin also use them; it has become quite fashionable among us. Almost like a competition to see whose flowers can bloom more beautifully..."

"Of course, I don't mind. Since the care of the flowers falls under your responsibility, I have no right to interfere with your work. If, in the end, it enhances the beauty of the flowers, it is commendable," Montserrat responds.

"However, how do you explain it?" he continues, extending his hand toward her.

He gently rubs the corner of her mouth with his finger, then reveals a trace of blood on his glove.

"I have repeatedly emphasized the importance of refraining from inappropriate behavior. If you wish to tend to the flowers, then focus solely on that task. If you wish to indulge your appetite, then do so. Be consistent, Elnaz. Otherwise, I cannot guarantee your continued service in milady's retinue."

"Uh... I apologize sincerely. But it tastes so delicious!" Elnaz pleads, looking up at him.

"You could also have a taste with me," she adds, imploringly.

"Thank you for the offer, but human flesh has long ceased to entice me. I shall leave it to you youngsters."

In this world, there exists a race known as assassins—born of humans yet possessing a pathological inclination to kill, perhaps even considering it their duty. Undeniably, they can be nothing short of demonic murderers. While they possess characteristics that diverge from the norm, these traits, to some extent, shape their behavior. It can be considered their "nature."

Foremost among these characteristics is their tendency to refrain from killing anyone other than humans. While they may have no choice when attacked or if a situation arises by accident, they strive to treat other living beings with utmost care.

It is a peculiar source of pride for these killers. Consequently, they must significantly restrict their dietary choices. Domesticated animals are out of the question, and even consuming plants, as living entities, is deemed inappropriate by the assassins.

Consequently, the vast majority sustains themselves through cannibalism. This holds especially true for the younger members whose vigorous physical and spiritual activities demand substantial energy. The older assassins can subsist on water and minerals, while the most scrupulous individuals extend their indulgence even to microorganisms, eventually abstaining from eating altogether.

Montserrat is a killer who has reached this level. For approximately fifty years, he has refrained from partaking in what could be considered a meal. Yet, despite such abstinence, he does not weaken. He is one of the four **daevas** of a special rank, a minion serving the fourth King of Evil, a position just beneath the highest echelons. Still, he remains the most notorious member of the assassin race—the "Surgeon of Slaughter," Montserrat, as he is known.

"Thus, Elnaz, I summoned you because I require your assistance in selecting a bouquet,"

"Eh? Ah, I understand. Are you going to see the revered mother? Consider it done!" Eln

She gestures for him to wait while she joyfully chooses the flowers. It takes time to gather each one, but even after being severed from their roots, they retain a degree of freshness. Elnaz carries out her task without ending the life of a single flower.

"This one is a perfect match for the revered mother's dress. Although this one is not so easy to part with either. Hmm, I'm not sure about this one..."

Regardless, it appears that the selection process will take some time. Montserrat, not particularly knowledgeable about flowers, can only wait in silence. To occupy himself, he decides to survey the garden. The garden is larger than necessary, capable of accommodating a marching formation of a thousand individuals. The towering castle in the

distance adds to its imposing impression. Yet, perhaps it is unnecessarily vast, considering that only hundreds reside within its territory. However, what if this entire garden constitutes their entire world?

There is nothing beyond the garden, and the landscape culminates in a cliff that overlooks the clear sky. In other words, this place roams within its own dimension, akin to a fantastical floating island in the sky. One might consider it a form of seal or even a mode of exile.

The truth is that the Garden of Bloodshed is isolated from the outside world, condemned to wander in a foreign space. However, as evident from their need for sacrifices, its inhabitants are not eternal captives. They repeatedly undertake limited sorties, akin to conditional releases. Should they wish, they can destroy the garden from within, attaining absolute freedom. Yet, two reasons prevent them from doing so.

Existing in a place that does not exist anywhere else grants them the ability to manifest wherever they desire. Places that emit beckoning scents or voices eagerly awaiting their arrival connect to the Garden of Bloodshed. Usually, the raised drawbridge is lowered, allowing the murderers to commence their feast, ball, or banquet. Young individuals like Elnaz utilize this opportunity to either stay within the garden or, conversely, depart from it forever.

To be precise, initially, only Montserrat and his mistress resided here. Therefore, seizing this opportunity to expand their sphere of activity proves immensely advantageous. Furthermore, in their sudden appearances from nowhere, they find their own allure.

"Apologies for the delay. I am certain the revered mother will be delighted, Mr. Montserrat," Elnaz remarks upon returning.

"Thank you. You may resume your duties now."

"Eat!" she exclaims.

With the fresh bouquet in his hands, Montserrat proceeds toward his intended destination. To himself, he ponders that he does not comprehend the symbolic meanings of colors, be they good or bad. They hold little interest for him. However, he is firm in his conviction that the revered mother is simply incapable of finding delight in them. There is no doubt that she despises them, curses them, regards them as vile creatures.

Nonetheless, his act of presenting flowers to her bears no malicious intent. He possesses a concept of honor. Despite their disparate circumstances, he always recognizes the individual deserving of respect. In other words, this constitutes the second reason.



At the foot of the cliff beneath the castle walls, Montserrat reverently kneels. Before him lie the desiccated remains of a human body, fragmented into small pieces. Only the preserved blond hair offers a glimpse of their original appearance, but they are far from short-lived. The truth is that her daughter had said the following:

"In this form, mother is most beautiful. Therefore, I will not forgive you if you dare to touch her, Montserrat."

No matter how the situation may appear, she persists in her appreciation for her. The servant, embodied by Montserrat, possesses no authority to challenge her decision. Instead, he can only lament with a melancholic smile, knowing that the mother is unable to witness her daughter's growth or share in the knowledge of her playful escapades.

"It seems she could not contain her eagerness and surpassed us in crossing the bridge. Nevertheless, she maintains the necessary humility, and I do not anticipate any significant events occurring prematurely. Hence, you need not worry."

With a gentle touch, the servant places flowers, soothing the tranquil body before him. Even though she may be disregarding the unwritten rule that ventures are permissible only when the drawbridge is lowered, her actions cannot be considered deceitful since she is

confined by her own self-imposed constraints. However, ultimately, everything hinges upon her disposition.

Depending on the path they tread, circumstances can alter in the blink of an eye. If a lady is invited to an exquisite ball, it would be impolite to refuse the opportunity to dance. Montserrat and everyone else concurs with this sentiment.

"In due time, we shall follow her lead as well. I understand this may dishearten you, yet I implore your clemency. After all, both you and I embody shades of light and darkness."

Montserrat offers a rueful smile, acknowledging the inescapable truth, and rises to his feet.

"If we make the first move, it would be remiss of us to leave matters unfinished, Mistress Quinn."

2

This planet, reminiscent of the Middle East in the Sacred Realm, exudes a cultural aura that permeates its very essence. Architecture adorned with rounded, convex roofs dominates the landscape, with the subtle shape of water droplets catching one's attention at every turn. Within the interiors, one discovers the occasional round mosaic that resembles a captivating kaleidoscope. These mesmerizing creations never fail to inspire awe and wonder. Prolonged gazes at these masterpieces can induce a dizzying sensation, a testament to their remarkable beauty.

To be frank, I rarely find myself captivated by the realm of **Drujvants**. Perhaps this stems from the fact that Kaikhosru, the sixth King of Evil, is more of an exploiter than a destroyer. He claims and treasures everything that can be deemed valuable, leaving behind remnants of a time when this planet functioned harmoniously.

Many alterations may appear excessively pompous and toxic from our **Ashavan** perspective, yet he refrains from obliterating all traces of civilization. The ecological situation may be tear-inducing, but in terms of traditions, there is much we can learn. Therefore, we desire for him to understand that our intentions are sincere and devoid of mockery or jest.

"You look absolutely stunning, Fer."

"You are simply adorable, Fer."

"Unbelievable! You are such a cutie, Fer."

We find ourselves in the crystalline tower hall, nestled at the heart of Arzang, echoing genuine words of admiration. A gathering of young girls surrounds us, some familiar faces among them, including the presence of Marika. Today, it seems only females are granted

entry, with Fer being the sole exception. Fer, without a doubt, is an extraordinary young man.

"Apologies for repeating myself, but you look breathtaking. Your appearance reflects the essence of a young woman, unmistakably."

"Kh! ..."

Flushed and hugging his own shoulders, Fer trembles with an endearing vulnerability. It suits him so perfectly that I find my own tastes undergoing irreversible changes. At this moment, I even develop a profound respect for Marika. It appears she has made it her life's mission to present her friend, who can now be considered a work of art, to the world. Marika offers Fer instructions on movements and posture, meticulously refining their presentation.

"Arch your back a little more. Lift your chin—confidently, yet at a slight angle, just like that! Pay attention to your body; it must not betray signs of fatigue or excitement. These are the fundamental rules of etiquette... Oh, and what beautifully defined abdominal muscles you possess!"

"Hey, pogo... Don't touch!"

Once again, I find myself in deep admiration of the culture and customs of this planet. This extends to the attire we currently wear—known as Raks Sharki, if I am not mistaken. In a sense, it represents the traditional garb of dancers, an attire of considerable expense. It is characterized by an abundance of exposed skin, adorned with glistening beads on the bodice, and a delicate loincloth that accentuates feminine grace and allure. In simple terms, it is an outfit that leaves little to the imagination.

Undoubtedly, I experience a fair share of embarrassment myself due to its revealing nature, but the sheer cuteness of Fer mitigates any discomfort. Cute—truly, it is impossible to conceive of anything more charming.

"Listen, Fer... Are you absolutely sure you're a male? Where did you hide all that beauty?"

"Samluch, don't translate the conversation in that way. No, I'm curious myself, but such directness is uncalled for."

"Enough. Enough from me! Why in the world must I wear these rags?!"

"Well, you did agree to accompany us, didn't you? It goes against your principles to let us go alone, doesn't it?"

"W-well, yes, I suppose I did say that..."

Marika hits the mark, leaving Fer flustered and bewildered. They resemble friendly "sisters" to the outside observer, and it warms the soul.

"But still, we never agreed on wearing women's attire. I didn't sign up for this. I thought we'd execute a more covert plan under the cover of darkness..."

"Ah, that would be impolite toward the girls, Fer. Raks Sharki is also a classic espionage outfit—a rather robust attire."

"Really? But I'm still a guy..."

"Then don't slack off, especially with your posture. Pull yourself together, so you don't slump!"

"Hey! Stop spanking me, Marika!"

Personally, I find their banter quite delightful. I don't mind if they develop a romantic relationship or anything of the sort. As much as I enjoy their company, it is time to face reality. I exchange a meaningful glance with Samluch and transition to our inner dialogue.

"So, what do you anticipate will unfold?"

"Are you referring to Alma becoming the new concubine? Well, I'd say the odds are about three to four in favor of that."

"Shall we place a wager then?"

"What are you scheming? She came here with that assumption."

Samluch seems to chuckle softly, and I can only concur. Two days after our encounter with Marika, Kaikhosru proclaimed his intention to send his new concubine to Arzang. The resounding voice of the dragon King of Evil reverberated from the heavens, carrying an unmistakable power that instilled trembling. However, the time for fear had long passed. If a new concubine is en route, who could it be?

Speculation and conjecture fill the air as people whisper various guesses, assumptions, and rumors. Considering the life-and-death importance of this matter to the locals, it is natural for them to be engulfed in turmoil, yet they remain in the dark. Among the potential candidates, the name Alma is occasionally mentioned. Rumors about her abound, but they fail to form a coherent picture. As the locals project their own hopes and fears onto her image, it is unwise to pass judgment based solely on these accounts.

Nevertheless, it underscores the significance of her role and persona. Hence, we believe it highly probable that Alma is the chosen concubine. Although we are unable to provide her with any support given our present circumstances, it signifies that she has successfully

fulfilled the mission assigned to her—something we need not regret. Consequently, the new concubine is expected to arrive the day following the decree, utilizing the dragon pulse as a means of teleportation—a local method. Accompanying her will be various officials who will serve at the court and seek local servants, a situation we intend to capitalize on.

Needless to say, we are plunging into the heart of danger, and I can only pay tribute to Fer's courageous spirit, refusing to let the girls undertake this mission alone. Let us not dwell on the outcome of their heroism. What matters is that we find ourselves in this predicament.

"Still, something feels amiss. If Alma has become the concubine, one would expect a larger entourage. Typically, such an occasion calls for a grand procession to acquaint the people. 'Henceforth, I, the illustrious one, shall command you,' and so forth."

"You make a valid point, but you are viewing it from an **Ashavan** perspective. The **Drujvants** do not regard common folk as pawns, so they likely do not feel the need to announce their arrival to them. Naturally, the same applies to Alma, who needs to play her part."

"And she isn't concerned that her peculiar behavior might raise suspicions? After all, she finds herself in a precarious position. I would have burst under such pressure within five seconds."

Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, establishing a connection with Alma's consciousness proves challenging due to her creation of an artificial forced fall. Meeting her face to face would change the dynamics of our conversation, but that is presently unattainable. Hence, we have no choice but to assume the roles of future servants. With approximately four hundred girls gathered here, we will have the optimal opportunity to catch a glimpse of the new concubine in person.

Whether it is Alma or not, an ordinary encounter could swiftly turn into a confrontation. However, as long as we blend in with the multitude of common people, the risk is minimized. After all, Kaikhosru will not tolerate his concubine causing indiscriminate damage to his treasures. While I am not pleased about employing unsuspecting girls as shields, it is the most sensible course of action.

"Remember, Marika, I cannot disclose the details, but our predicament is undeniably perilous. It would be best if you refrained from unnecessarily revealing your familiarity with us," I caution Marika with a serious tone.

"Is that so? But I'll feel so lonely if we part ways."

"Um, I feel the same way, of course, but..." I falter, unable to find the right words.

Fer and Marika continue their playful exchange, their voices filled with affectionate banter, prompting Samluch to chuckle involuntarily.

"Don't be so easily swayed, Fer. In times like these, you must gather your resolve and protect Marika at all costs," Samluch advises, a touch of amusement lacing her words.

"Gh!..."

"Can I rely on you, Fer?" I ask, looking at him with a mix of hope and expectation.

Marika gazes at Fer with adoring eyes, expressing genuine admiration and trust instead of pressuring him. I can't help but notice that this approach seems to work well when one wishes to achieve something from a man. There's certainly something to learn from Marika's demeanor.

"Fine. Just don't stray too far from me, Marika," Fer finally concedes, his tone revealing a sense of protectiveness.

"Yes. I'm counting on you."

While I cannot exploit someone solely for physical gain, I recognize that when someone is in a good mood, the risk of receiving irrational demands from them decreases. There is little harm in leveraging my feminine charm. As they say, behind every good husband is a good wife, or perhaps it's more of a manipulation. Since I find myself dressed as a woman, I should seize this opportunity and elevate myself to a new level. Regardless of my intentions, I am about to witness firsthand the allure and genius of female charm that even the king of evil himself succumbed to. Even without the **Avesta**, I sense an inherent incongruity between Alma and myself, which naturally leaves me on edge. It seems that she is approaching.

The sound of a horn resounds, signaling the arrival of a noble figure, and for a brief moment, the faces of the silent girls freeze. In the next instant, they all gracefully kneel without hesitation.

"Well... Who have they presented to us?" I ponder aloud, my unease mirrored by Samluch, who kneels beside me.

However, alongside the unease, I also sense a bold determination and even excitement emanating from Samluch. We have spent nine days on the Corpse of the Dragon Star, and the fact that the situation has finally shifted from its stagnant state must be invigorating for her. I should learn from her inherent courage. Just as I think about it, I sense the presence of someone appearing on the balcony that overlooks the entire hall from above.

"...Appeared?"

It would be imprudent to reveal oneself prematurely, and so patience is of utmost importance now. At least the feeling is undeniably that of a **Drujvant**, but I must not jump to conclusions based solely on this. Suppressing my anxiety, I endure and continue to wait.

"Raise your eyes," a commanding voice instructs, and at that moment, I finally behold the concubine with my own eyes.

Simultaneously with me, everyone present holds their breath, and then a collective exhale, filled with a mix of emotions, follows. What exactly is expressed in that collective exhale—delight or envy? Perhaps due to my lack of experience, but I am still a woman, and it is hard for me not to feel any emotion in the presence of such magnificence.

Her lustrous dark skin, hair resembling shimmering silver, eyes that glisten like black jadeite, and impeccably refined features, even visible beneath her loose attire—every aspect of her appearance exudes an unparalleled sense of harmony. To put it simply, she is terrifyingly beautiful. There is an air of eccentric beauty that sets her apart, making it evident that she is far removed from common people. However, it is not merely her external charm that captivates our hearts.

"What a melancholic and courageous young woman."

And it is not due to my assigned role alone. Any woman, without prompting, would understand this. The sharpness and evanescence akin to a sword honed to perfection. The sorrow and solitude stemming from the yearning to become like her and the realization that such an aspiration is simply unattainable. The conclusion is clear. She cannot possibly be a **Drujvant**. Certain of this fact, I finally lift my gaze, and our eyes meet.

"But you..." I find myself utterly captivated by her gaze, so mischievous with slightly narrowed eyes.

At this moment, I forget that I am still looking at her intently...

"I suppose there aren't many impressive rumors about me, but are you disappointed?" she jests, her voice resonating with surprising candor, almost as if I were conversing with a man.

"I have come to assist you. I am Alma..." she begins, but her mischievous eyes beckon me closer.

At this point, I no longer pay heed to the fact that I am still openly gazing at her.

"I don't think there's a more fitting epithet for you, my dear..." I murmur, intuitively grasping the truth behind Alma's being.

Ah, that's it. That is why she exudes such indomitable spirit, such resplendence that borders on fragility.



At the ensuing banquet, as the melodies of the orchestra filled the air and the graceful dancers moved in rhythm, there was an undercurrent of tension among us. Samluch, despite her best efforts to conceal it, ground her teeth in frustration. It wasn't just the lack of experience in serving drinks that bothered her; there was a deeper unease that we had been too naive in our approach, and Kaikhosru was no fool either.

"Stop praising the enemy so carelessly!" Samluch exclaimed, her voice filled with frustration.

Her outburst was met with a sudden silence that fell over the room, drawing the attention of everyone present. Alma, ever composed, cast a quick glance around before the festivities resumed, as if nothing had happened. She then turned to me with a sigh, as if she understood the weight of our predicament.

"Quinn, let's continue pouring."

I snapped back to attention and nodded, realizing I had been momentarily lost in the commotion. The **Ashavan** girls, perceptive as they were, could sense the calmness radiating from Alma, even though they still held an underlying fear of her. They were unaware of the true circumstances, and there was nothing we could do to change that. Samluch, however, couldn't contain her annoyance, and Fer stepped in to calm her down.

"Calm down, Samluch. We mustn't embarrass Alma. If we cause a scene again, expulsion will be the least of our worries."

"Shut up! I understand everything..."

"If we were discovered, why all this subterfuge? Why do we keep instilling fear in everyone around us? Wouldn't it be better to put them at ease? And sitting next to Alma feels like sitting next to a **daeva**."

"So, you want me to switch to a **yazata**?" Alma replied, taking a composed sip of wine before answering.

"No, I can switch if needed. Even if you don't wish it yourself. But there are conditions," Alma stated, her gaze fixed upon us.

"Conditions? Like returning to the sacred realm?" I ventured, seeking to understand the nature of her decision.

Feru's curiosity got the better of him, and a wide smile spread across Alma's face.

"Exactly. You're a smart one, Quinn. You see, you're not only capable of dressing amusingly," she remarked with a playful tone.

Before I could respond, Samluch interjected with a frustrated tone, "What does it matter? I'm not doing this willingly, and you should understand that!"

"Hey, calm down, Fer."

It was clear that Alma was playing with us, teasing and testing our resolve. Her experience as the oldest and most experienced **yazata** gave her an air of eccentricity, but it wasn't as unbearable as Zurvan's presence. I couldn't help but sympathize with the fact that we were merely keeping her company for the time being. Through a glimpse into her mind, I began to piece together her intentions.

"Quinn, you're pouring too slowly. As soon as the wine is less than half, you must refill it immediately. But don't forget to check on the patron's well-being. You don't have to keep pouring indefinitely," Alma instructed, her words a mix of guidance and correction.

I acknowledged her words with a nod, determined to be more attentive in the future. It was clear that Alma had her reasons for assuming the role of a **drujvant** beyond the absence of the necessary conditions. I was curious to know what those reasons were.

"So, besides the conditions, what are the other reasons?" I asked, seeking to uncover the full extent of her motivations. Alma took another sip of wine, savoring the taste, before responding.

"Indeed, there are other reasons. One of them is to protect the locals."

Samluch, however, seemed to struggle to grasp the significance of Alma's answer, a perplexed expression forming on her face.

"Think about it. Even if we were to defeat Arzang, his days are numbered. A minimal economy is necessary, and for that, fear is needed. If everyone were to discover that I am their ally, they would relax immediately, hastening their own demise."

"So, it's about preventing them from becoming complacent? If we give them too much hope, they won't know when to slow down?"

"Yes, as embarrassing as it may sound, that's how the human psyche operates. Today, you can see it in action."

Her gaze shifted towards the **Ashavan** girls, and I understood what she meant. By keeping them in check, instilling a controlled sense of fear, Alma was able to protect the citizens by keeping them just shy of the breaking point. It aligned with our original plan, and though it might be difficult, we had to endure.

"Naturally, I won't be reveling in luxury alone. Whatever I take from them, I will store carefully. And if needed, you can visit me and 'steal' something to distribute among the needy. Don't worry about angering Kaikhosru. We've discussed it," Alma assured us.

"I find it hard to believe..." Samluch murmured, voicing her doubts.

"I share the same sentiment," I added.

"To be honest, me too," Feru admitted.

Kaikhosru knew the truth about Alma and her mission. Yet, instead of punishing her, he appointed her as his concubine, granting her the freedom to act against Arzang as she saw fit. The fact that we were not communicating telepathically now was due, in part, to Alma's refusal to forgive him for eavesdropping. But there was something more...

"I don't doubt you, Alma, but it's Kaikhosru I have trouble believing," I confessed.

Samluch echoed my sentiment, her frustration evident. Alma paused, studying each of us intently, before carefully choosing her words.

"You're right. Kaikhosru lacks the concept of a conscience," she began, her voice carrying a hint of sorrow. "But men possess a trait that transcends good and evil. Their pride. They cannot tolerate being ridiculed, so they retaliate in kind."

Alma's words hung in the air, and a certain allure emanated from her lips as she uttered the word "gnawing." Fer blushed, looking away, while I felt a tinge of embarrassment. Samluch, on the other hand, grew restless. Alma chuckled briefly before continuing.

"The affection Kaikhosru feels for me stems from that pride. He cannot bear it when women defy his wishes, and thus he seeks to subdue me. It's a show of generosity on his part, a display of power. Of course, we must remain vigilant, but such male logic is not uncommon. The game has just begun, and our maneuvers are in full swing."

Confusion clouded my thoughts, and I struggled to comprehend her explanation fully. It seemed that Alma wanted us to remain silent, as if implying that as children, we lacked the experience to grasp the intricacies of this game between a man and a woman. While it felt unjust to be kept in the dark, I didn't dare argue. I had come to realize that no one but me knew the true nature of Alma's **Commandment**. If we continued to doubt her abilities, it would undoubtedly lead to revealing that secret, a topic not fit for outsiders to touch upon so brashly.

Alma's determination was unwavering, and as fellow **yazatas**, it was our duty to trust her decision and follow her lead. We couldn't burden ourselves with excessive doubt. We had each other's support.

"Indeed, I still have time to drive you away. I don't go easy on subordinates."

Alma, however, responded with utmost seriousness. It seemed she had noticed the undercurrents of doubt among us.

"In general, this discussion about our current situation can be considered closed. Let's move on to the next topic."

Her gaze lingered on each of us before posing a direct question.

"Am I understanding correctly that only you came to help?"

Surprised, I glanced at Fer, who looked at Samluch, seeking guidance. Finally, he let out a weary sigh, realizing it fell upon me to explain everything to Alma.

"Quinn... Please, explain everything to her thoroughly. Break it down step by step."

"Sorry."

"As I mentioned earlier, Vohu Mana and I possess similar powers. However, our patron spirit is currently dormant. This means that the connection between the **Yazatas** sent on this mission and His Majesty is one-way. We are unable to communicate with him or relay any information."

I paused briefly, silently acknowledging that this applied to everyone except me.

"On the other side, only knowledge of the **Yazata's** survival and the number of feathers expended was known, allowing for additional orders depending on the situation. Retreat or continuing the battle were among the possible commands, as was the case this time."

As I explained, Alma caught on to the information, pointing to herself.

"But since I function like this on the road, even the voice of the king reaches me with difficulty. As a result, I do not know either the number of reinforcements or their names, but will you finally tell me them?"

Samluch, finally grasping the situation, responded in a somewhat displeased whisper, answering the question posed to her.

"There are two other people besides us. Magsarion and Zurvan." Alma's reaction was a mix of worry and happiness, a complex display of emotions that was difficult to put into words.

Outwardly, she only grimaced as if she had tasted a dozen lemons, causing Samluch to exhale with relief.

"What happened? So they gave you trouble too? As I understand, I have never seen such dysfunctional people in my life," Alma exclaimed.

Fer, intrigued by Magsarion and Zurvan, asked Alma about their experiences, to which she nodded in response. Both of them were the most experienced **yazatas**, and it was clear they must have faced numerous challenges and hardships. Alma sensed the silent pressure and sighed, ready to share her story.

"We first met when we were five years old. You probably already know that, but at that time, the Sacred Realm flourished, and an institution for the preparation of **yazata** students worked in it. In general, it was something like a school, and there I met with him. Of course, I was very young then, so I hardly remember the details, but I remember this air of unsociableness around him as well."

Fer interjected, asking if Magsarion turned at that time, to which Alma replied, "I don't think that's the only thing. It may well be that he stood out in a good way from the crowd."

Alma's reminiscences seemed to bring her a sense of joy as memories of the former Sacred Realm flooded her thoughts. The image of his father, Mr. Varhran, being in good health, Mrs. Nahid at his side, and the gathering of heroes in the palace of justice without fear or reproach filled her mind. Those childhood years, under the care of powerful and virtuous adults, were perhaps the happiest times in Alma's life.

"He didn't do anything. Maybe we were taught, but we were all children, so there was a place for games in the program. But he still stood there, scowling his nose, and stubbornly did not move from his place. So why did he even come?" A

Fer probed further, asking if Magsarion was her first love, to which Alma responded evasively, "Oddly enough, maybe. Even if it seems to me that it would be disrespectful to deny or affirm this."

Alma then delved into the darker events that followed. The attack by the Worksop of Annihilation, when she was only seven years old, had left a deep scar on her soul. The memories invoked unimaginable anger, hatred, sadness, and resentment within her.

"At that time, I was seven. A worthless burden that could not even fight, which is why I don't even know exactly how those who accepted the battle died. But that something that clouded the sky... Those eyes, that voice that didn't even consider us insects – it seemed that I would go crazy from it. No, I even wanted it. At least that way I could escape..." Alma's voice trembled as she recounted the horrors of the Annihilation Star Cluster.

Alma's mind was clouded with darkness, and she could hardly recollect what followed. She was eventually transferred to the current sacred realm and woke up, realizing that the nightmare was not a dream. The loss of her friends, parents, and loved ones weighed heavily on her heart.

Silence fell upon the group, each one unable to find the right words to console Alma. The depth of her sorrow and the burning flame within her eyes were visible to all.

"I don't remember anything after that. Who saved me, why did they even pick me up... It's hard to rejoice at such luck. Almost all of my friends died then. And dad, and mom, and friends..."

Alma then shared the turning point in her life when she encountered Magsarion once again. Exhausted and on the brink of despair, she witnessed Magsarion's relentless determination in the face of defeat.

"I think he does it even now when he has free time," Alma commented, indicating that Magsarion's training and dedication continued even in their current circumstances.

Samluch acknowledged that not many people knew about Magsarion's actions, emphasizing that he could not be stopped by anyone. Alma mimicked swinging a sword with both hands, signifying the extent of Magsarion's commitment. Fer, intrigued by Magsarion's mysterious behavior, questioned Alma about his decision to constantly wear a mask. Alma, amused by the idea, suggested shyness as a possible explanation but quickly dismissed it.

"Do you think? Of course, it would be funny if that's the case..."

Alma's recollections painted a complex picture of their relationship, filled with ups and downs. She concluded her story, leaving the group with a sense of the profound experiences she had endured.

But upon reflecting on it, I found that I could somewhat comprehend Magsarion's enigmatic nature. However, perhaps I merely wanted to believe it... Overall, he was a complex individual. If the foreboding presence truly arrived on this planet, then where was he now? "Ah, he should be with Zurvan..." I replied, realizing the slight delay in sharing this information with Alma.

Nonetheless, I proceeded to divulge everything I knew in as much detail as possible. I recounted the imminent return, Zurvan's peculiar instincts, our successful rescue of Marika, and the subsequent events that unfolded. Alma listened in silence, her countenance growing increasingly somber. After hearing the entirety of the tale, she spoke in a voice laced with sordid emotion.

"The Gardden is coming. So Zurvan said?" Alma asked, her voice wavering.

"Yes, but... we still do not know what this means..." I trailed off, unable to complete my sentence.

"Damn, what a fool I am!"

Alma suddenly rose from her seat and swiftly departed, leaving us frantically gazing after her.

"Hey, wait! Where are you going? Alma, hey!"

I called out, but there was no doubt in the determination of her steps. She continued on, picking up speed in a straight line, with an unwavering purpose. Her destination was Marika, who danced gracefully nearby.

"Oh, pardon me... How may I assist you, Mistress Concubine?" Marika looked up from her elegant movements, her gaze meeting Alma's stern and experienced eyes.

They stood in close proximity, almost touching, and only then did I notice something of utmost significance. At some point, Alma had grasped a fearsome object in her right hand—a weapon resembling brass knuckles with an attached sword—a jamadhar.

"No, stop, Alma!" I lunged forward, accompanied by Samluch and Fer, but our efforts were in vain. We were a mere step too late, unable to intervene in time...

"Did you find pleasure in it, creature?" Alma's right hand swept through the air with blinding speed.

Simultaneously, Marika's head soared into the sky. Her trajectory was eerily graceful, ascending higher and higher, devoid of any intention to descend.

"It hurts, unbearable, please, HELP..." a hauntingly clear voice echoed from the severed head, as if emanating from the depths of hell.

"Why did you kill me? I called for help..." Marika's decapitated head wore a chilling smile.

Her enchanting eyes betrayed nothing but emptiness—a void that encompassed incomplete thoughts, impossible to articulate.

3

Lying exhausted on the street corner overlooking Lake Arzang, a young boy finds himself in a precarious state. Despite the world around him showing signs of improvement, there still remain those like him, struggling to endure. The saying goes that heaven helps those who help themselves, meaning that without taking action to survive, salvation is elusive.

Karim, a boy of nine with a kind soul, lacks the intelligence, physicality, and willpower that others possess. He is, for all intents and purposes, an ordinary child. It's challenging for an

orphan who has lost his family to navigate life without the support of friends. Having managed to secure his share of provisions, his strength now falters, not due to despair or deep emotions, but merely exhaustion. His weary, somewhat clouded eyes fixate on the soup and bread left on the ground. Both items have begun to rot, teeming with larvae, yet he makes no effort to remove them, only observing their presence.

Across the lake, the glistening crystal palace stands, its majestic structure rising above the water. Arzang is built in a way that the streets diverge from the palace in concentric circles, which means that Karim has unknowingly stumbled upon one of the most prestigious areas, despite its current desolation. This quarter was once home to the **Drujavants**, who served the former concubine Nadia and displayed unimaginable cruelty. People still avoid this vile neighborhood, leaving Karim without any passers-by to offer a helping hand.

Oddly enough, he is grateful for this absence, for he has no desire to be urged to move on or put in the effort. In his mind, the world will remain cruel even if it manages to recover. He harbors only one wish—to fall asleep and reunite with his parents, brother, and sister. Karim's eyes, obscured by a thin film, continue to gaze at the wondrous landscape. And this is not a mere figure of speech. A genuine miracle unfolds before him—a rainbow, a seven-colored ribbon that soars over the crystal palace, stretches across the lake, and advances toward Karim like an enchanting bridge.

This earthly miracle, far removed from the pain and hardships of his world, beckons the unfortunate boy towards heaven. At least, that's what Karim believes, and his conviction only strengthens as people appear on the bridge.

A troupe of girls, with radiant smiles on their lips, traverses the rainbow bridge. Their beauty is mesmerizing, surrounded by an ethereal glow and an aura of emptiness. Karim doesn't even realize how his trembling hand reaches out towards them, grateful for the warmth that someone has taken hold of it. A girl, several years older than him, settles down in front of him, her eyes meeting his.

"Ah, ah..."

Karim's voice barely escapes his withered throat, but he is certain that she possesses the power to save him. After all, she is so beautiful, her smile so pure and transparent. She will never command him to keep living or exert himself. In his foggy mind, Karim perceives this simple fact as "good." He pays no heed to the girl's peculiar attire, which clearly belongs to a different culture.

It's evident that she hails from a distant place, and this very fact bolsters his trust, as she exudes an air of servitude. She is an angel, he believes, sent down to grant the wishes of unfortunate souls like himself. With unwavering conviction, he places his trust in her, though doubts remain buried deep within him.

"What's wrong? How skinny you are..." the girl remarks, her tone surprisingly carefree given the circumstances.

"Boys need to eat a lot and grow big. Oh, look, there's even food here!"

Her eyes widen with picturesque surprise as she extends her hand towards a plate with a spoon left nearby. She begins stirring the half-solidified soup, humming softly to herself.

"Here, say 'Ah'!"

Her smile stretches from ear to ear, devoid of malice, as she attempts to feed Karim. The concoction is a putrid mass teeming with larvae, far beyond what can be called soup.

"You can't be so capricious. Come on, 'Ah'!"

Karim recoils, resisting her advances, his body arching in protest. A nauseating stench assaults his nose, and a sour taste pervades his mouth, prompting his desperate resistance. He longs for peaceful sleep, not a life-or-death struggle filled with agony. He does not wish to die from the torment such a meal would bring, nor does he want to accidentally survive because of it. But why does nothing go as he desires? What is this girl thinking?

"Enough..."

In anguish, Karim turns away and finally finds the strength to voice his refusal. The ominous spoon no longer pursues him, and he begins to feel a sense of calm, relieved that the girl has given up. However, his mistake soon becomes evident as events unfold.

"Hee hee hee..."

The girl's demeanor undergoes a complete transformation. Perhaps Karim had misunderstood her from the very beginning. Like a half-dead insect twitching upon stimulation, he now awakens to the truth, even if it is too late. Her smile remains pure, innocent, and utterly sincere. There is emptiness within her, devoid of anger, sadness, or joy—a vessel from the start, propelled by a damned soul and driven by a singular desire.

"Then let me."

A shrill sound cuts through the air as the girl thrusts the spoon into Karim's left eye, scooping out his eyeball, skull, and brain as though it were ice cream. He can't help but scream.

"Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah!!"

His screams reverberate loudly, even he himself unsure of where he musters the strength. The repulsive sounds, accompanied by excruciating pain, shake him to his core. Yet, it is not merely the physical agony that fills him with terror.

This girl is too frightening. The fear she instills in him is beyond comprehension. How can such a creature exist? How can the universe forgive such abomination?

Karim cannot fathom that he has come face to face with such an entity, and thus, he is overcome with horror.

"Help... Go..."

Tearfully, he implores God for forgiveness. He doesn't want this. He doesn't want this. He doesn't want this. He was foolish, mistaken. He will strive to improve, so he pleads for help, beseeching God to save him.

"Save, save, SAVE, SAVE... I don't want to die!" Karim's desperate cries echo, pleading for salvation from the depths of his being.

"Don't worry. I will definitely save you."

Karim's gaze meets the mesmerizing, half-moon eyes of the demoness, and in a desperate moment, he finds himself plunging headlong into a dark abyss. It is an abyss that stretches infinitely, devoid of any light or hope, darker than anything he has ever encountered before.

As he hurtles downward, consumed by fear and uncertainty, the thought of his family waiting for him in that bottomless void seemingly inconceivable and distant, fading into the recesses of his mind.

Meanwhile, Elnaz, the girl in the maid outfit, rises from her position after thoroughly licking the remnants off the spoon. She can sense the potential worthiness of this scene, knowing that her actions will surely impress Milady. And so, she decides it is time to reveal herself fully.

"Have you made your choice, Elnaz?" asks another girl in a matching maid dress, Farangis, as she waves a spoon in her hand.

It appears that everyone else has already begun their tasks, leaving only the two of them behind.

"Yes, I have. And what about you, Farangis? Have you found something cute?" Farangis pouts playfully, contemplating her answer.

"Give it here. It suits me perfectly."

"No, I couldn't possibly take it myself. Honestly..." Elnaz replies, puffing out her cheeks in a sweet and endearing manner.

She picks up the plate from the ground, even though there is still a small amount of food left on it. Without hesitation, she hands it over to Farangis.

"Let's go then. Shall we make a little wager?"

"Okay, but what shall we compete in? Quantity? Quality? Or perhaps Milady's mood?"

"Let's keep it simple and compete in quantity. It seems there weren't many visitors here, so it could be more interesting that way."

"Then we must hurry. The others will leave us with nothing if we're too slow."

"Exactly, let's be quick. But let's also maintain an air of elegance."

Determined and resolute, the two girls lock eyes, sharing an unspoken understanding. It is time to perform. In an instant, a series of thunder-like roars echoes through the air, one after another, resonating with immense power. Simultaneously, Farah begins to dance in the air, her movements reminiscent of a peculiar puppet, before descending into the lake with dazzling splashes. However, this is not the end of their extraordinary display.

"Farangis?" Elnaz calls out, concern etched in her voice, as she realizes that her companion has fallen into the water.

Unbeknownst to Elnaz, a black knight descends upon her with brutal speed, intending to strike her delicate neck with a single mighty blow. The knight's furious howl pierces the air, accompanied by the menacing presence of a colossal iron sword-shaped mass. But Elnaz, fragile and seemingly defenseless, holds a small spoon between her delicate fingers, effortlessly intercepting the knight's attack. The impact that should have severed stone meets the resistance of her spoon, pushing the knight back.

"What are you suddenly? What a creepy gentleman..."

With graceful movements, she twirls the spoon in her hand, much like a pen used for writing. Miraculously, her action causes the swordsman, Magsarion, to be flung away, flying through the air like a straw caught in the wind.

"There you go!" Elnaz exclaims, her voice laced with an air of nonchalance.

There is an absence of visible power in her relaxed demeanor, yet the repercussions of her actions defy all logical explanation. Three majestic buildings, once serving as the dwellings of the **Drujvants**, crumble like slices of cheese. The debris cascades down upon Magsarion, obscuring him from sight in a cloud of dust and rubble, leaving no trace of life behind.

Zurvan, another demon, fares no better. He manages to evade the trajectory of Elnaz's spoon but is unable to escape unscathed. As the spoon slices through the air, it transforms into a deadly disc, tearing it into pieces. Zurvan narrowly avoids a direct hit, but the incredible rotation creates powerful gusts of wind, inflicting wounds that draw blood beneath his torn cloak. In stark contrast to the violence and destruction unfolding around them, Farangis emerges from the lake, unaffected by the chaos, her awkwardness on full display. Without even glancing in Elnaz's direction, she retrieves the plate that was flung out of the water, focusing solely on her soaked dress and murmuring in a soft voice.

"My entire dress is wet and full of holes. What am I going to do..."

"No need to worry! You look adorable in any outfit! Don't be upset, okay? Alright?"

It becomes evident that there are few beings in the world whose eccentricities can be accurately described as "unbalanced." Consequently, these murderous demons are feared, shunned, and despised. They embody the impossible union of darkness and light, impervious to words and incapable of mutual understanding. To them, everything is but an empty phrase, and they could just as easily be perceived as humanoid monsters. Even what may appear as a lighthearted conversation between two girls is, at its core, the behavior of creatures dwelling in an entirely different realm.

It is precisely because of this understanding that Zurvan can only muster a forced smile. The fact that he was nearly vanquished by a plate and a spoon fails to surprise him in the slightest.

"So, this is the extent of your power? How amusing."

The assassins have no regard for weapon selection or combat techniques, distinguishing them even further. Most likely, the concept of honing the art of killing holds no relevance for them. For them, killing is as natural as breathing, an inherent aspect of their existence. Just as fish need no instruction to swim, they see no need to complicate their murderous endeavors with tools and theories. Thus, they are more than willing to seize everyday objects at hand and utilize them as deadly weapons.

A broom, a shovel, a chair, a table, even stationery—anything is suitable. Once they grasp an object, it becomes an impeccable instrument of murder. The power they possess defies the laws of physics, as the indomitable will of the high-ranking **Daevas** subjugates the very environment to their egos. Their reckless desires can reshape the world beneath their feet. Decimating an entire mansion with mere cutlery is merely scratching the surface of what they are capable of.

"But remember, you are not the only one who has lost their sanity here."

The Garden's ambush, meticulously orchestrated by Magsarion and Zurvan, unfolds in a relentless cascade of hate-fueled incantations. As Zurvan glances behind him, he throws a

gift bestowed upon him directly at Magsarion—a nonconventional technique that allows for remote influence, sharing the burden and reducing the time required for activation. Unbeknownst to Elnaz, she effortlessly halts Magsarion's charge with her spoon. Yet, as their contact is made, the air surrounding them blazes with white-hot intensity.

"Come on, let's blow them away!" Zurvan commands.

The simultaneous employment of the amplification and teleportation gifts spirals out of control. And what if, in addition to this, they reduce the distance traveled to zero? Magsarion, clad in his diabolical armor, has been made "hard and heavy" by the double layers of protection. Zurvan shares the coordinates with him, which do not differ at all from his previous position.

In essence, Magsarion has teleported to the same exact spot. This phenomenon gives birth to an extreme velocity, vibrating under tremendous pressure. It erupts like a blast wave of flames, unfurling like a colossal flower, engulfing everything in its path in an instant. Though Magsarion may still wear his demonic armor, the two assassins have surely been reduced to ashes. To achieve such an effect, Magsarion transformed himself into a bullet, while Zurvan assumed the role of the conductor. As he had earlier proclaimed, neither of them can be deemed sane.

Yet, it is precisely because of their deranged nature that they have become the apex of their craft. In a realm plagued by dwindling numbers, few possess a comprehensive understanding of the workings of these assassins. The Sacred Realm's strategy revolves around minimizing the risk associated with murderers. By concealing details about their activities, they aim to restrict their influence and keep them shrouded in mystery.

Quinn and the others have never even heard of the Garden of Bloodshed, and it is through this deliberate information control that the spread of their infamy is mitigated. Thus, young and inexperienced **yazatas** are spared the burden of contemplating murderers and the horror and despair that accompanies such knowledge.

As is evident from the current Arzang, any location teeming with the desires of life and death can become a blood-soaked garden. Those with the inclination and knowledge of how these demons operate can easily beckon them forth. For a Sacred Realm struggling with numbers, the goal is to minimize the risks. Though the battles may not diminish as long as the war persists, they can at least contain the dissemination of information. The truth of the matter is that only a madman can triumph over a demon—an idea that encapsulates it all.

"Are you alive, Magsarion?"

"No problem. But now is more important"

"...Yeah, it couldn't end so easily."

As they stand side by side, the dense smoke in front of them begins to dissipate. The spectacle that opened up to him is so absurd that it makes you doubt your sanity.

"Ai-yay-yay! Wow, I did not expect this at all."

"My dress ... How uncivilized, don't look at me!"

Amidst the chaos and carnage that unfolds, a peculiar sight captures the attention of those present. Two piles of mangled flesh, remnants of what were once the maids Elnaz and Farangis, now stir and emit sounds, despite their lack of human form. How they manage to vocalize remains an enigma, an unsettling mystery that adds to the nightmarish scene before them.

In a matter of seconds, bones intertwine, muscles thread their sinews, and layers of skin and organs knit together, restoring the girls to their former selves. It is a grotesque spectacle, akin to witnessing a film being played in reverse, as their bodies mend without a single blemish—save for the tattered remains of their garments. Yet, this uncanny regeneration is just one of the many extraordinary traits possessed by these murderers.

Immortality, an inexplicable quality that defies reason, sets them apart. There is no rational explanation for their eternal existence; they defy categorization as anything other than demons. In the aftermath of their revival, Farangis' face flushes with embarrassment, her nakedness a source of shame, while Elnaz adopts a menacing posture, thrusting out her chest in a display of intimidating strength. Such trivial concerns hardly faze these seasoned killers, known as **yazatas**.

Meanwhile, Magsarion remains consumed by an insatiable hunger for bloodlust and hatred, while Zurvan's eyes alight with a fire that transcends mere attraction to the female form. Their earlier exchange, laced with casual affection and a prediction of impending chaos, has now materialized into a grim reality. The army of the fourth King of Evil has descended upon the domain of the sixth King of Evil, and the **yazatas** who dare to oppose them pay no heed to the well-being of the locals. To them, the inhabitants are mere bait, disposable pawns in a battle that looms inevitable, certain to claim lives in its wake.

"What stubborn you gentlemen are."

"Men like you are not my type at all, and we don't have time for games."

Zurvan, unfazed by the girl's curt remark, responds with a touch of amusement.

"Why so rude, my dear? It is far better for young people to indulge in a range of hobbies."

However, beneath the surface banter, a harsh reality lingers. The Gardeners of Baliga, like Elnaz and Farangis, can only remain in this realm as long as the bridge remains accessible—a span of time typically limited to an hour. Yet, the situation is far from clear.

In truth, their stay will extend until every soul within their reach has been snuffed out. Eighty-eight gardeners, a small fraction of the four hundred thousand inhabitants of Arzang, face a grim fate. In approximately thirty minutes, their lives will be extinguished, their existence wiped away by the merciless hands of these murderers.

It is a chilling reminder of the havoc wrought by the garden's denizens seven years ago—a catastrophe that witnessed the culmination of chaos when the Workshop of Annihilation's grotesque creations ran rampant. In a mere three hours, the arriving demons mercilessly eradicated eight hundred million lives on a certain planet, etching their brutality into the annals of history.

Given Zurvan's perspective, the time for lighthearted banter has passed. If he is to get any semblance of pleasure from the impending slaughter, he must execute his macabre dance swiftly, while the final act remains within reach. The curtains of his fate are poised to close, leaving little time for leisurely conversation.

"As you wish."

"In this case, we shall serve you promptly. Do you mind, Farangis?"

"No, let's finish quickly."

Once again, the naked maids reached for the spoon and plate, their absurdity magnified by the sheer pressure emanating from their presence. It was a force that could drive any ordinary person to madness. Amidst this ominous atmosphere, Zurvan took a step forward, preparing himself for what lay ahead, when suddenly...

"...Kh!"

Magsarion's sudden and overwhelming zeal broke the silence. In a swift motion, he turned his gaze in another direction, losing sight of the maids. Such an act was unthinkable, tantamount to suicide, and it didn't take long for everyone else to follow his line of sight and understand the cause.

"Oh, this won't do! Quite the predicament!" Elnaz exclaimed, her nerves showing.

Farah, too, grew more embarrassed by the moment. Surprisingly, Zurvan's smile widened, an expression of genuine fascination. Their collective gaze fixated on the devil's rainbow—the bridge that linked the material world with the garden. Walking along it was a figure cloaked in black, moving with measured steps. A slender shadow whose calm voice matched its appearance.

"Elnaz, Farangis," Montserrat called out, his voice chillingly distant.

The mere utterance of their names sent shivers down the maids' spines.

"How do you explain this vulgarity?"

"F-forgive us, Mr. Montserrat!" the two maids jumped up in a panic, hastily attempting to cover themselves.

Their recent adversaries were momentarily forgotten, only to be remembered in the next instant. A sound—a scream—erupted from Magsarion, more akin to a nonhuman howl. It was a battle cry of pure hatred, its intensity threatening to rupture eardrums. The explosion of unrelenting rage, a manifestation of his insatiable thirst for destruction.

"Ha!"

Montserrat tilted his head, observing the different but equally menacing bloodlust that consumed Magsarion. He glanced at the approaching black hurricane, his eyes filled with something akin to hope, refusing to miss what came next. The power of the special-ranked **Daevas** was unquestionable; there was no debate to be had. What fascinated Zurvan most was the anomaly embodied by Magsarion himself.

"Haoma..." Magsarion muttered, his lower body severed, desperately trying to heal a mortal wound. Or was it something else?

"Sami... Gaokerena."

His focus rested on a single attack, on killing, on extermination. The upper half of Magsarion, suspended in the air, still clung tightly to his sword. Rotating relentlessly, its insides scattered, it lunged at Montserrat with a side blow. Though not a direct hit, the element of surprise played a role. Montserrat managed to defend himself with his hand, yet the attack had an effect. He was thrown off the bridge, landing gracefully on the roof of a nearby house.

"How unexpected... You act almost like 'him'," Montserrat remarked, admiration creeping into his voice.

He rose to his feet, assuming a flawless pose once more, this time with genuine appreciation.

"... No, perhaps there are enough similarities and differences between you"

The black knight, despite losing his lower half, whispered something amidst the chaos.

"Haoma, Haoma..."

He attempted to heal his grievous wound, using his extraordinary regeneration abilities to their limit—or so it seemed. The sight on the rainbow bridge was horrifying. Like a spider ensnaring its prey in the darkness, fangs emerged from Magsarion's armor, sinking into his torn flesh, binding it together. They greedily absorbed blood, flesh, and perhaps even something more vital for sustenance. And before their very eyes, the damaged areas were

restored, a grotesque spectacle of rapid regeneration. Magsarion, though staggered, rose to his feet, his appearance seemingly healed. Yet, something had changed.

Something was missing, replaced by something else, though one couldn't pinpoint exactly what. It remained an enigma, an answer that eluded all who witnessed it. What was evident, however, was his unquenchable and boundless hatred—an inferno of fury, heartless and shameless, urging him to run rampant and unleash destruction.

Montserrat's left hand crumbled like sand, a consequence of Magsarion's recent attack and its excessive regenerative effects. The forbidden technique, accelerating cell division to the point of self-decomposition, proved highly effective against those with formidable regenerative powers, including immortal assassins. But such knowledge only applied to ordinary killers.

"Elnaz, Farangis, come to me," Montserrat commanded, watching as the maids hurriedly retreated, their steps taking them to safety.

Then, turning his attention back to the remaining **yazatas**, he effortlessly ran his right hand over his left, instantly halting the decomposition. The hand regrew, now concealed by clothing. The sheer power he possessed—a mere fraction of it—resembled an astonishing display of sorcery. Though the maids remained in the distance, the looming threat remained, if not intensified, far surpassing their capabilities.

"Allow me to reintroduce myself. My name is Montserrat," the butler declared with a respectful bow. As he straightened himself, he added, "My special skills lie in murder and all that it entails."

Simultaneously, his right hand dissipated into thin air, disappearing from sight. It delved deep, as if a rift had opened in space, retrieving something he had left in the garden.

"You call me the 'Surgeon of Slaughtter,' do you not?"

From the void emerged a weapon, two meters in length, resembling a colossal windmill. The majority of it was a handle, with a steel disk affixed to the end. The disk's circumference brimmed with teeth resembling those of a shark—an immense circular saw. At that moment, it spun leisurely, unaffected by any external force. Not due to the wind blowing against it, but in defiance of it, digging relentlessly into its path. It demonstrated the overwhelming power of Montserrat, capable of disrupting even the planet's rotation.

The gradually accelerating spin converted energy into an unimaginably potent gravitational force, generating atmospheric vortices that tore everything and everyone in their proximity into shreds. A rotating saw, its cry accompanied by fountains of blood—the symbol protected by Montserrat, an instrument of boundless cruelty, embodying his infamous reputation.

The chorus of destruction harmonized with the agonized screams of the unfortunate victims, providing the soundtrack for the metal screech that heralded the commencement of this feast of murderers.

"The battle with Sir Varhran brought me an indescribable sense of pleasure, a feeling I hold above all else in my heart. Our encounter, dear younger brother, was nothing short of a miraculous display by the universal hero in his final moments," Montserrat addressed Magsarion, his words tinged with a hint of understanding, as if he held knowledge of a deeper truth.

The black butler couldn't contain a friendly smile on his beautiful face, a smile that conveyed both camaraderie and a shared understanding.

The air grew heavy with an eerie silence as the words hung in the air, pregnant with ominous intent. Montserrat's address to Magsarion took on a chilling tone, a foreboding prelude to the terror that awaited.

In response, a deafening cry erupted from the depths of darkness, an unholy chorus of curses that reverberated with an intensity beyond comprehension. Its volume surpassed anything previously heard, piercing the very fabric of the world itself. It was as if the walls of the world quivered in fear, unable to contain the sheer malevolence that emanated from the depths of their souls.

Kill... within him now no other desire remained.



I delved into Alma's thoughts, immersing myself in the depths of her mind, desperately trying to make sense of our predicament. But no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't bring myself to accept the unfathomable absurdity that lay before us.

"Temporary... **Commandment**?" I uttered, my voice tinged with disbelief.

I sought clarification, yearning for an explanation that would unravel the enigma.

"Sometimes they can. In exchange for the fact that for a certain time they eat normal food that is indigestible for them, they become the chosen **ashavan**. And not only outwardly - and memory, and character, and skills, everything to the last detail ... They appropriate it for themselves. To literally put on someone else's skin."

Theoretically, these restrictions could be limited to mere hours, or perhaps tied to weather changes or a specific trigger word. In such cases, the violation of the **Commandment** would go unnoticed. In theory, one could accumulate an unlimited number of these **Commandments**, discarding them with equal ease. Yet, in reality, such occurrences were rare, if not unheard of.

Very few possessed the capability to wield this power, and even fewer dared to traverse the boundaries of their **Commandments**. The act of taking a **Commandment** was akin to embracing faith, a solemn oath to oneself that stood apart from the workings of the world. To change **Commandments** as one changes evening attire, driven solely by fleeting emotions, should be an impossibility. It defied the very essence of what a **Commandment** represented.

A surge of pain pierced through our collective consciousness, cutting through the layers of disbelief. It was a cry for help, a desperate plea that echoed with agony and despair, shattering any lingering doubts. The realization washed over us, an undeniable truth that we wished to deny but could no longer ignore.

"Why did you kill me? Are you not the protector of the weak?" Marika's ethereal voice echoed hauntingly, her head suspended in the air, unwinding into a ribbon resembling an elongated ellipse.

"I was in so much pain, Fer. So sad that you're killing me."

The resemblance to apple peel only served to reinforce the grim revelation—the one we had believed to be Marika was but a masquerade, a mere disguise. It became increasingly evident that the creature in front of us had done unspeakable things to the original, and the true purpose of its existence sent shivers down our spines.

"It can't be..."

Fer whispers in a trembling voice. Now everyone has already noticed this, but no one has the courage to say it out loud. This is too scary and too insulting, the mistake we made is so great



I comprehended it all. I remembered everything. The agonizing cries, the plea for assistance that had resounded like a broken record. Each tortured word had undeniably belonged to Marika, the same girl we had foolishly perceived as our enemy, slaying her without a trace of mercy or remorse. We had reveled in a false sense of righteousness, ignorant to the magnitude of our mistake. Such ignorance was unforgivable, and our own stupidity warranted nothing short of a death sentence. Even if we despised ourselves more than anyone else.

“So I beg you. Let there be no more people like me in the world ... So that next time you HELP, so that you protect the others.”

And yet, despite the torment she had endured, Marika harbored no grudge against us. She had endured unimaginable suffering and betrayal, but she still prayed for a better future. Though I knew not where the afterlife lay, I believed that the real Marika would offer us the same plea.

“Otherwise, I WILL NOT UNDERSTAND why I had to die.”

And it was this realization that seared our hearts with an acute anguish. Unable to bear the weight of our transgressions any longer, Fer, consumed by grief, unsheathed his sword with a fierce cry, charging forward in a frenzy of revenge. He swore to vanquish the true enemy, in the hope that it might bring Marika's tormented soul a measure of peace. But Alma, seizing Fer by the nape of his neck, forcibly restrained him, halting his vengeful onslaught.

"What?!" Fer's voice trembled with disbelief and rage, his fists clenched, poised to strike Alma in his fury.

We all erupted into a cacophony of howls, our voices blending with the screams of the terrified maidens fleeing the hall. Amidst the chaos, Alma remained eerily composed, her icy demeanor unyielding. Deep furrows etched themselves upon her forehead as she silently assessed the malevolent presence before us.

It was a creature that had donned Marika's flayed skin, concealing its true form beneath the façade. This great evil, still concealed within its cocoon, exuded a palpable bloodlust that pervaded the air. I sensed no malice directed at us, no amusement at our foolishness or admiration for our prowess. Instead, there was a peculiar sensation, like a fragile bubble of incompleteness.

The nauseating feeling sent chills down our spines, a visceral reaction to the horrifying truth we could no longer evade. It became painfully clear that our attempt to flee, to teleport away from the monster, had been thwarted. The very act of teleportation had been neutralized by its presence, reducing our desperate escape to naught. It was inconceivable, incomprehensible, and even though we were living it, the reality of the situation eluded our grasp.

"Why didn't the teleportation work?"

Our attempts to flee, our reliance on the gift of the Star Spirit—all of it had been rendered futile by a single gaze from this abomination. If my suspicions were correct, it had stripped us of our powers, leaving us defenseless in its malevolent presence.

"Hee-hee, hee-hee-hee-hee..."

A chilling laughter erupted from the cocoon, devoid of mirth or sanity. Its otherworldly essence permeated the surroundings, distorting reality itself. The handmaidens who inadvertently brushed against this ethereal sensation shattered like delicate blood flowers, their fragmented forms bearing witness to the sheer terror that unfolded.

"Since you have met me, be so kind as to die properly."

It's bloodlust. So huge and pure that I just couldn't figure it out right away. She told me from the very beginning that she wants to kill us. Because she has nothing else. Because she is an empty and colorless creation. As if watching a distant event unfold, I recognized the truth, the identity of our adversary, Alma's warning to flee, the instantaneous nullification of our celestial powers—it all made sense if my theory held true.

"Perhaps I should introduce myself. My name is Frederica."



The cocoon unwinds, and a young girl dressed in a blue dress with lush blond hair appears from inside. With her posture, which combines elegance and charm, she could easily be mistaken for the heiress of a noble family. However, I know the truth. This is nothing more than a monster in the guise of a girl. She is the ultimate evil at the head of a cursed assassin race... the fourth King of Evil.

"My passion lies in murder and all that it entails."

I knew her, all too well. She was the detestable wretch who had mercilessly slain 'Quinn,' her vile act forever etched into my memory.



The time has come. It is this thought that now unites all of us, and therefore the words of Alma are simple and frank.

"We all will die. There is no hope that we will leave here alive. No matter how we resist, only death awaits us, and they shenot let us die in peace."

So she declares, covering us with her body, without even turning in our direction. Boldly, majestically, proudly

"And so you must get up. To pave the way for those who come after us. Just like Mr. Varhran did."

We have not the slightest reason to humiliate ourselves in the face of an inescapable enemy. We rise to our feet and resolutely respond to Alma's demand to show our dignity as **yazatas**.

"Actually, I wasn't going to die today. Of course, we will resist with all our might. Please don't order us to run again. Escape from the King of Evil is impossible..."

Even when confronted with this fact, we all vowed to maintain a productive mindset. In order to do what must be done according to the **Avesta**. There is some irony in this, but right now, when the situation is especially hopeless, I am even more aware of what my goal is.

Refute the mathematical proof of death that my father is so sure of. The time for a miracle is now, now or never.

"...Forward!!" Samluch is the first to attack.

From the outstretched right palm, a jet of scarlet aura escapes. This is one of the functions of the new prosthesis installed in the Sacred Realm. All this time, when using the **Commandment**, Samluch never drained herself to the bottom, so she accumulated quite a lot of "remnants".

The prosthesis sends a powerful impulse to Samluch's nervous system in order to extract the energy that was still lying in her dead weight. Thus, the pain she experiences increases significantly, but with it, her maximum capacity also increases. The technology is indeed dangerous, but it does not hold firepower.

A storm of aura, like a wave, covers the king of evil, after which a loud explosion is heard. The average **daeva** would have burned to the ground from this one attack

"Was that really enough?"

However, it goes without saying that our enemy defies common sense. Therefore, we immediately move on to the next attack, and Fer's gift falls on us.

"Kshatra!"

From it, my body seems to light up from the inside. This is clearly not an ordinary gift, as can be seen from the fact that it simultaneously affects all of us. It is one of the seven ideals contained in the **Commandments** of Fer. Undoubtedly, today is the very day when the gifts of the Star Spirit manifests itself many times stronger.

"The date has just changed. You can not hold back, today is the most successful day. The mobility drop that accompanies enhancement gifts has been minimized."

In other words, now we are all covered with extremely strong and light armor. Even the King of Evil is unlikely to be able to pierce this with one glance. With newfound courage in my soul, I am already rushing after Alma. Because of Samluch, everything around is hidden behind clouds of dust, but such an abnormal target is not so easy to lose sight of.

Deprived of any foreign impurities, transparent bloodlust. Like a fresh breath of wind, from which flowers sway, bottomless darkness swirls behind the veil. Hadn't she backed off a single step and hadn't been hurt in the least by the first attack? This cannot but annoy me, because no matter how powerful the enemy is, she remains a living being.

Since she does not have the unimaginable size of father, it should be assumed that her limit is quite achievable. I am a moment late, and the first monster in the dress strikes Alma's jamadhar. A flash of a perfect arc with a minimum of unnecessary movements digs into the neck of the fourth king of evil. It looks like an exact repetition of the blow that tore off her skin. While every moment stretches into hours, it seems to me that I see a golden-haired head flying, but the result is completely unexpected.

"...Ha?!"

The King of Evil's head is still in place. Her neck is snow-white and white, without a single scratch. However, she did not block Alma's attack. She hit right on target, and her neck is not strong enough for the blade to bounce off her. If I try to describe everything the way I saw it, then Alma's jamadhar seemed to pass through. It's all the same, as if she was chopping the fog. It is impossible to influence it with brute force. So she dodged at the last moment with unseen speed? Or maybe she herself is like smoke?

Common sense tells me exactly these two options, but intuition tells me that this is not the case. However, I can't find any other answer, and therefore I don't stop the attack ...

"Ha-ah-ah-ah!"

Be that as it may, if you do not try to hit her, there will be nothing to talk about. I muster up my resolve and with all my strength I slam my clenched fist into the face of the King of Evil. The Princess of Murder doesn't think to look at me: she just stands with a smile that can even be called charming. She doesn't really try to defend herself or evade. The fist, which I am determined not to leave a wet spot from her impudent carelessness, feels that I have definitely hit. Right on target... Moreover, I clearly feel the destruction. With a frailty that matches not so much a **daevas** as an average **ashavan**, the head of the King of Evil flies off her shoulders.

Yes, without a doubt, I took it down without a trace. This is an indisputable fact, and yet the girl remains as graceful as ever. There is not even a bruise on her cheeks, not a drop of blood, and only her lush curls sway in the wind caused by the shock wave. What it is? How to explain this? The subdued horror begins to remind of itself again, and Alma angrily shouts at me.

"Don't stop, Quinn, there's no doubt about it!"

"...Kh, yes!"

Based on an unbending fighting spirit, the order drives my hesitation away. The body, devoid of tension, acquires a source of unbridled strength, and I make a second, and then a third blow.

"Saam, Fravard!"

Next, we again feel the gifts of Fer. Protection in addition to attack, and then the increase in speed from flying. Moreover, their effect is several times stronger than usual, and it is not weakened by poor compatibility. The physical enchantments covering us can already be called dishonest, and Alma and I deal one blow after another. A moment later, Fer joins us, and we represent the raging waves already the three of us. In accuracy, in speed, in power, and in density, this attack is definitely superior to anything I have ever experienced. We embodied the unbridled forces of nature, and I have no doubt that we would have demolished even a mountain in a few seconds. But no matter what...

"Four..."

Why is the effect still zero?

I understand perfectly well that the enemy is much stronger than us, and I would not be surprised if the blows from her flew off, but this is a real absurdity.

"Three..."

We fall. We do damage. And yet there is a feeling that every blow misses. By this time, there can only be one explanation.

“Two...”

As the mysterious countdown comes frighteningly close to completion, Samluch yells in our direction.

“Well, move away!”

“Let me!”

She jumps over us and lands in front while her right hand is on fire from the huge amount of aura. In addition, even more charms are added to it ...

“Saam, Saam ...!”

To Fer's gift, she adds her own two feathers - such a risk is already tantamount to suicide. It is hardly possible to survive a further strengthening, which means that now it can show the maximum firepower available to us, from which space itself is curved. Looking up at the sharply increased crimson aura, we abruptly jump back.

“One...”

The counting down King of Evil is so defenseless that she even closed her eyes. And Samluch unleashes a blow on her, into which she has invested all her remarkable strength. A moment, and we are covered by a wave of stunning destruction.

The earth convulses beneath our feet, as though seized by the relentless grip of an unforgiving earthquake. The resplendent Crystal Palace, once a symbol of grandeur and majesty, now lies in ruins upon the ground. From its shattered remnants, fountains of water erupt, transforming the regal halls into a watery abyss. No longer can this place be called a castle; its descent into the depths of the lake is imminent, a mere matter of minutes. The hall, still quivering and disintegrating, teeters on the brink of complete annihilation. Great and small fragments crumble, as if unwilling to assume an even more desolate state.

We, too, bear the weight of this cataclysm, struggling to endure its torment. Even now, the air hangs heavy, stifling our very breath. Yet, amidst this chaotic tableau, there exists a singular exception—a figure seemingly residing in an alternate realm.

“Zero. Ten seconds have elapsed; perhaps it is time to commence.”

The Fourth King of Evil, Frederica... Her grace remains untouched, radiant in its unsullied splendor. Not a single tear mars her elegant blue dress, nor does a speck of dust defile her countenance. Observing this, I am at last convinced of my suspicions. The true reason behind the countless failed assaults becomes clear to me.

"Immortality..."

She is impervious to death. As long as she maintains her current state, she is invincible. Far beyond the mere concept of mortality, **Drujvants** with regenerative abilities are not uncommon, but Frederica resides on a different echelon entirely. Her miraculous ability to regenerate is so swift that even a direct strike seems to miss its mark, as if she had deftly evaded the blow. Such an absurd physiology, capable of instantaneously mending even her garments, defies reason. Undoubtedly, her **Commandment** is at play here, its power serving as the sole nucleus within this hollow vessel of a woman.

The desire to kill and an unwavering self-awareness as the executor of that desire—these constitute her modus operandi. Only she herself deems this as common sense, rendering any attempt to comprehend her motivations an exercise in futility. Most likely, Frederica's reasoning follows along these lines: I am an immortal murderer, hence I must endure any attack without defense or evasion.

The immortality inherent to her from birth, amplified by the **Commandment**, attains horrifying heights. To the extent that one begins to question whether anything is capable of killing the Fourth King of Evil. It appears that others have arrived at the same conclusion, as evident by their perplexed expressions. However, Frederica pays no mind to our mental disarray and addresses us with an air of innocence.

"I had intended to assume the role of Marika until the bridge collapsed, but you launched your attack prematurely, thus disrupting my plans. It seems I owe you a tribute to your powers of observation, for I utilized those precious ten seconds in tranquility."

With these words, she gazes at Alma, a smile adorning her face. She refrained from retaliating as a reward for being extricated from her predicament. Does this signify a shift in our fortunes? Each of us feels tension coiling within our bodies, while Frederica, on the contrary, casually surveys her surroundings. Suddenly, she turns her back to us and strides away.

"What?!"

Taken aback by this unexpected turn of events, we find ourselves hesitating, able only to observe.

"Could she be withdrawing all of a sudden? What is she planning?"

When she reaches the now-collapsed exit of the hall, she halts and crouches, retrieving something from the debris. More accurately, she tears something away.

"Perhaps today, we shall conclude with this. It is my first opportunity to dance with the esteemed **yazatas**, and my experience is lacking. I hope you can pardon any shortcomings."

In her hands, she cradles nothing more than the lifeless remains of a maid, buried beneath the rubble—the lower half, to be precise. With an ear-to-ear smile, Frederica presents us with this flaccid human corpse. She twirls it, as if displaying a fashionable accessory, effortlessly rotating it by the ankle.

"I suppose... brother Bahlavan would deem any form of concession the epitome of foolishness. However, I have heard that ladies should exercise discretion on a first date. It would be vulgar to reveal everything at once."

With ease, but at a disquieting speed, she continues to spin the severed lower half. Centrifugal force cleaves it at the groin, yet the other half remains intact, resulting in both legs extending a full 180 degrees, resembling a macabre rope of flesh. In an instant, she transforms the human remains into a whip-like weapon—a blasphemous act, one that shows no reverence for another's life, an act that only a true demon can accomplish.

"If you wish to witness a more refined spectacle, I implore you to exhibit your capabilities. I await your invitation."

In a fleeting moment, her azure dress billows in the wind.

"Once."

Her graceful leap could be deemed an artful dance move, but in the midst of battle, such a motion hardly befits the situation. Frederica wields her fleshy whip, inching closer to us, yet her approach lacks swiftness, leaving ample room for a counterattack. Undoubtedly, this is uncharted territory for her...

It is not merely a low opinion she holds of us; caution was never part of her disposition. Consequently, attacking her from behind would prove effortless, yet we all instinctively opt to dodge instead. It is a collective decision that proves fortuitous in the ensuing moments.

An explosion of preposterous magnitude eclipses even Samluch's recent assault, in which she had exerted every ounce of her strength. The already dilapidated Crystal Palace crumbles entirely, engulfed in a cataclysmic blast of water and air, hurtling us into the distance. As I soar through the firmament, akin to a verdant leaf carried by the wind, all I discern beneath me is a colossal crater in place of the palace. And within its center stands the King of Evil, a fragile girl mistaken for a mere mortal. Her power transcends the boundaries of reason, an outright rebellion against the very fabric of the universe. With naught but the carcass of an ordinary man, she wields the ability to reshape the planet's very landscape.

"This is known as 'strengthen thyself.' Commit it to memory. Nothing is beyond their reach."

Alma's voice resonates near my ear, and I realize she cradles me in her arms. Upon closer inspection, I perceive Samluch and Fer, employing the gift of flight to remain steadfast

alongside us. But that is not the extent of her capabilities. If one desires to confront the Workshop of Annihilation, one must cast aside apprehension, Quinn.

"...Indeed, I understand." I nod, once again turning my gaze downward, where Frederica gazes up at us. Squinting ever so slightly, she addresses us in that same innocent tone.

"Dear ladies, I was unaware of your capacity to fly. Regrettably, I cannot reach you in this predicament. I suppose I must amend my attire."

Confusion fills the air as she maintains her gaze, closing her eyes in a sudden motion. For a brief moment, her intentions elude comprehension, until the shocking reality unfolds before us.

"Palangineh... 'I am blind for two seconds.'"

She whispers under her breath, swinging her whip into the empty expanse. The distance and angle of impact seem devoid of any practicality, and yet, appearances prove deceiving.

"...Gha?!"

"Samluch!"

The sound of organs rending intertwines with my friend's cry. An invisible blow, possessed of such formidable power that it effortlessly pierces Samluch's fortified shield, strikes her from the side. She hurtles backward, enveloped in a cloud of crimson, but the anomalous onslaught does not cease there.

"For one second, only my little finger may be employed."

With that declaration, Frederica raises her finger ever so slightly, and Fer clutches his chest, blood spilling from his mouth as he plummets to the ground.

"This cannot be..."

In the midst of the chaos, a revelation emerges, striking me with greater clarity than the surrounding pandemonium. Palengineh... Nothing more than a temporary **Commandment**.

Diabolical precision as payment for blindness—a minute action capable of targeting vital organs. It is a gamble, one that entails immense risk and reward confined to this singular moment. An exchange of beliefs devoid of all sentimentality, achievable solely by the hands of murderers.

"Three secon—"

In those fleeting three seconds, the air crackles with anticipation as the scene unfolds before my eyes. She stands there, on the precipice of change, preparing to don a new outfit

that signifies more than just a change of clothes. And in that very moment, as if in perfect synchrony, Alma and I share an unspoken decision to descend upon Frederica, who stands below us, undeterred by any physical distance that separates us.

We know that the only way forward is to confront her face-to-face, to meet her head-on, in a battle that may appear desperate to the outside world. Yet, in the face of such adversity, I refuse to succumb to despair. The time has come to unleash my hidden weapon, my trump card, and the conditions for its deployment have already aligned...

"Alma..."

The words escape my lips, barely a whisper, as I toe the line between honoring my **Commandment** and breaking free from its constraints. With every passing second, I reach out to her consciousness, bridging the gap between our minds.

"You're concealing something, aren't you? I cannot say for certain, but it seems you possess a secret plan to defeat her, don't you?" I observe as Alma's eyes widen in astonishment, mere hours since our fateful encounter.

Despite the brevity of our acquaintance, I feel a growing understanding of her character, a glimpse into the depths of her being. In many ways, she resembles His Majesty Sirius—a prideful spirit that assumes every burden, burying it deep within, her soul scarred from self-blame.

However, I have already shared my thoughts with her, assuring her that we stand by her side, ready to support her. She, in her own candid way, admitted to discarding formalities with subordinates, urging me to offer my assistance without hesitation. And that is precisely why I am here.

"I shall lend you my strength for a few minutes. Alma, it is your turn..."

"Sorry..."

Alma's voice resonates with timidity, yet she resolutely gazes forward, speaking the words that are necessary.

"Please, Quinn, make her fight with all her might."

Her plea is imbued with unwavering confidence, her belief that this will grant us the chance to overturn the tides of fate. I cannot deny her request; it would be a betrayal of the trust she has placed in me.

"It shall be done. I am on the verge of creating a miracle." I assure her, determination etched into every syllable.

"I am unable to walk or run."

In an instant, a brilliant burst of light engulfs the surroundings as the robe of the King of Evil and my trump card activate simultaneously, colliding in a clash of powers.

"...Oh, you?"

Frederica's voice betrays her surprise, though I cannot fathom why. After all, she herself had inquired about it. Forbidding myself from walking or running, Frederica propels herself towards me with astounding speed, aided by her teleportation abilities. But I stand my ground, unwaveringly blocking her attack. It strains every fiber of my being, and I feel my crossed arms groan under the pressure, yet I refuse to yield. I match the destructive force of the King of Evil blow for blow, refusing to be overwhelmed.

Why, you may wonder? I had stated the reason explicitly.

"You wished to witness our true capabilities, did you not? You yearned for an invitation... Well, your desire shall be fulfilled."

With arms outstretched, I channel all my strength into a single blow, aiming squarely at her.

"My name is Quinn... The one who bid farewell to your mother on her final journey!"

The impact is unlike anything I have experienced before. My fist connects with its target, exerting a force that rivals the regenerative powers of the King of Evil. It becomes evident that this collision is not easily traversed. Natural physical laws come into play, and a reaction ensues. Frederica hurtles backward, plummeting headfirst into a newly formed crater, shrouded in a swirling cloud of dust. I seize this opportunity without hesitation, swiftly launching another strike.

"By the way..." as the dust settles, and Frederica's unhurried voice breaks through.

"You do share the same name as mother, don't you?"

Her words reach me, punctuating the air with a sense of intrigue. Despite the looming threat of her meat whip hurtling towards me, I nimbly dodge, almost gliding around it. My reflexes have reached supersonic levels, yet I can still speak with composure. It is precisely what she desires.

"Perhaps I should have acknowledged that fact when I first heard it from Marika. Please accept my sincerest apologies for my insensitivity."

Her apologies hold no sway over me. The very fact that she can speak through Marika would be an insult to justice. I evade a sweeping attack with a swift leap backward, following up with a forceful kick to her head. The blow cleaves her from crown to groin, yet

as I prepare to strike her again with the back of my fist, her previous wounds vanish without a trace. Her exploded head reforms, unmarred by the previous assault.

The Immortal Princess of Murder stands strong, but I can still engage her in combat. This is my trump card—a hidden function that enables me to contend with opponents on an equal footing, provided they themselves desire it. **Daevas**, for the most part, revel in destruction and slaughter, seeking lively prey to entertain them for as long as possible.

And so, I grant them their wish. I exploit the inherent arrogance that taints every sentient evil being, narrowing the gap between us.

"Were you watching us at that moment? Did you witness our first and final conversation?"

"I saw it, heard it, and felt it within myself—the full weight of her emotions and regrets."

"Tell me more, if you don't mind."

As the whip cuts through the air, I dodge, retreat, evade, and parry. Every opportunity is seized, every strike delivered with precision. While the enemy remains unfamiliar with the concept of evasion, striking her proves relatively straightforward. Yet capitalizing on every opening for attack is a far more challenging task. When one side has no need to dodge, and the other dodges incessantly, circumstances eventually tip against the latter. Indeed, my secret technique possesses limitations.

Even if the opponent wishes for me not to perish too swiftly, no one desires to be vanquished by my own hand. Thus, even with some degree of parity, victory remains elusive. Especially now, facing the fourth King of Evil, a frightfully vacant girl who harbors little regard for emotions—the effectiveness of my trump card against her is limited at best. In fact, it could be considered one of the most unfavorable scenarios. Yet, surrender is not a notion that readily enters my mind. Fully aware of the challenges ahead, I continue to fortify my resolve.

"What was mother thinking in her final moments? You mentioned her regret, but what did it pertain to?"

"You pretend not to care..."

I dart between her onslaught of blows, landing a powerful strike to her face. In that moment, Frederica halts her whip, her voice tinged with melancholy.

"It must have been agonizing for her to depart this world prematurely. She longed to witness my growth, yet her wish went unfulfilled."

"...Kh!"

The strain of maintaining my position, adhering to the King of Evil's perception of me as a mere puppet, proves fruitless. I must elevate myself to an entirely new level, transcending my current boundaries. But even without this imperative, I can sense my patience waning, nearly depleted.

You pretend to feel something... I almost feel sick. There is no forgiveness for such evil. And this is by no means just my personal opinion.

"You don't even understand the very concept of insensibility!"

For this monster, everything is just an imitation of emotions, which deforms the thirst for blood. The thought does not get out of my head that no matter how deep I plunge into her heart, I will see only an endless emptiness. With a voice like the wind blowing from the abyss, the king of murderers asks me a question.

"If I'm wrong, then why? Tell me, Quinn, mother.

"...Fine."

As my fist remains lodged in Frederica's head, her twisted form entwines itself around my arm, drawing her face closer to mine. Only her mouth remains visible, contorted into a sickening smile resembling a sinister crescent moon. The sight fills me with revulsion, causing my thoughts to spiral once more.

In sacrificing herself, 'Quinn' had made the right decision, choosing to lay down her life in order to protect the world from this calamitous menace. And all this time, she has carried the weight of regret, yearning for the ability to fulfill her duty completely. Now, I can perceive this as my first true directive—a purpose driven by the amplified desires of the departed, now strengthened further by the support of a living soul, a condition that has just been fulfilled.

"She expressed the following sentiment: Until the root of evil is eradicated, I cannot dare to reunite with my husband. I beseech you, please..."

Summoning every ounce of strength within me, I clench my hand and unleash it with a resounding cry of unwavering determination.

"Annihilate this abhorrent monstrosity... This is the final testament of 'Quinn's' will!"

The resulting explosion transmutes into a shockwave, cleaving Frederica at the cellular level. While it is evident that such an act cannot outright slay an opponent of her nature, there is no denying that it propels me one step closer to the realm of power inhabited by the malevolent king.

"You are the life that was never meant to be. You should have perished in the bud, before taking your first breath, just as your mother had desired."

"Why do you utter such dreadful words? A mother's love does not deserve such treatment."

Frederica's insatiable greed and 'Quinn's' indomitable will converge within me. Combined with Alma's mandate, they grant me the capacity to confront even the fourth King of Evil. It is possible that these forces alone may not suffice to vanquish her. Yet, such considerations hold little significance for me. My objective is to push Frederica to fight with unwavering determination.

Regardless of the cataclysmic events that unfold, I am resolved to endure and provide Alma with the decisive opening. I possess unwavering conviction that if I persevere until she can execute her covert plan, victory shall be ours.

"My mother continued to nurture me even in death, in a form so diminutive and delectable..."

Resurrected without a hitch, Frederica discards her whip, seemingly unconcerned, and swiftly seizes a new weapon.

"I felt genuine gratitude toward her, and thus devoured her with the utmost reverence. To this day, she lies in the same place, ensuring that I never forget the taste of my beloved mother."

She retrieves the Almatore from the ground, a remnant most likely salvaged from the crystal palace. Needless to say, it bears little resemblance to anything of value, akin to discarded refuse. Yet, in terms of length, it more closely resembles a weighty sword compared to the mere stretching weapon of her previous whip. This change holds little interest for her. It may be a minute alteration, but I have no choice but to accumulate such transformations gradually.

"So that mother's love remains with me henceforth, forever and ever. Oh, what a marvelous symphony of bloodshed... Where else can one find such unbreakable bonds?"

With a light step forward, Frederica's figure suddenly becomes blurry. She spins like a top, and I halt the spinning rebar with my right hand. Shortly thereafter, howling winds rise and clouds of dust billow. A single blow of that magnitude could effortlessly decapitate a thousand ordinary individuals, signifying an undeniable escalation of the threat.

And yet, this is merely the prelude. Gaze upon both, feel with every inch of your skin, strain every nerve in your body. I must enter a realm uncharted by any other **yazata**. The transcendent world that Mr.Varhran once treaded, where a clash with the King of Evil becomes conceivable...

"There is no forgiveness for you. I shall shatter you into fragments."

"I hold the same sentiment on the tip of my tongue!"

And so, our macabre dance of death commences. There is no trace of swordsmanship in her series of rebar strikes, nor does she attempt to weave them together into a seamless fighting style. Each of her movements remains entirely amateurish—presumably, Frederica has never received any training in what can be deemed martial arts. However, there is nothing comical or unseemly about it. The absurd speed of her swings, coupled with their inherent power that defies all laws of physics, obliterates logic itself. No matter how fruitlessly she swings, her overwhelming energy does not cause her to lose control or tire.

Considering that martial arts emerged from the desire of the weak to defend themselves, the neglect of such techniques by one of the mightiest **daevas** is an expected outcome. Attacks change trajectory, disregarding the laws of inertia, and occasionally even reverse course as soon as they pass by. Moreover, as implausible as it may sound, at times they surpass the boundaries of time and space. The fact that reinforcements can materialize from the right and strike from behind is far from the most disconcerting aspect.

Sometimes time freezes, and a missed blow remains suspended, while on other occasions, the past repeats itself, causing a blocked attack to resurface at the most unexpected moment. In the direst instances, a blow arrives from the future, before it has even been executed.

And each strike possesses such absurd power that the earth cracks open and cyclones manifest in the sky. Like a cataclysmic force raging across all four dimensions. Any semblance of common sense is left far behind, confirming that the title of one of the seven absolute evils is no empty epithet.

This is the king of evil. The immeasurable combat potential of our gargantuan sworn adversary gradually unveils itself.

"Too soon, too soon!"

Ribs splinter and the side fractures, leaving a gaping hole in the thigh. Yet, it is too early to surrender; I can still move.

"Haoma, Kshatra..."

As if nudging me from behind, gifts arrive from a distance. I have no time to identify the benefactor, but I understand everything already.

"Saam, Fravard!..."

Fer, I am indebted to you. Your assistance shall not be squandered. Leveraging the full power of the re-boost, I deliver a roundhouse kick, propelling Frederica far ahead. However,

she promptly rebounds like a taut elastic, and just as I prepare to meet her with another blow...

"Rot... in hell... you monster!"

A crimson tide of aura surges in from the side, enshrouding the diminutive King of Evil from head to toe. Tremors of gratitude course through me for the unwavering support of Samluch, fueling my determination to emerge victorious.

"Let us!"

Frederica's aura, having breached the barrier, no longer clasps the Almatrice in her hands. We stand poised for a hand-to-hand clash. My own body proves far more reliable than a subpar weapon. I can sense that the pinnacle I strive for lies tantalizingly close. With a resounding battle cry, I take a step forward, launching myself into the melee I've poured two decades of preparation into. The arm dislocates, the leg snaps at the knee. Facial skin tears away, leaving the right eye sightless. Time dwindles to a scant amount, hanging by a thread before my movements cease.

Yet, I refuse to retreat. I pledge my unwavering belief in the beacon of hope and will work a miracle at any cost. My entire right half lies obliterated, vanquished without a trace, yet I persist in the fight. It is almost comical, really. In a peculiar sense... I find myself behaving as recklessly as he does.

"Magsarion... If you were in my stead..."

I am certain that even in a comparable predicament, you would not waver. Hence, I cannot succumb face-down in the mire. Speaking of it with a strangely lighthearted tone, I sprint through the landscape gradually turning pallid. Cradling an improbable sense of déjà vu within my soul...

"Perhaps I have experienced this before."

5

Let's rewind time a bit. As Frederica unveiled her true form within the crystal palace, the streets of Arzang were already transformed into hellish circles. Not solely due to the presence of over eighty murderers feasting upon them, but rather because a battle unfolded involving only three individuals. At the very heart of this clash stood Zurvan—a sight that might sound peculiar.

The coastal area where the confrontation ignited had been reduced to dust, while the radius of destruction expanded gradually, engulfing new streets with each passing moment. Viewed from above, it appeared as if Arzang was being meticulously unraveled in a spiral pattern. Their combat followed such a trajectory with clear intention.

"Curious. Never before have I encountered **yazatas** like this," Montserrat remarked, swinging a circular saw, unable to suppress his laughter.

Undoubtedly, his power was unimaginably immense, drawing everything around him into a macabre slaughter that proved exceedingly difficult to evade. It was as though, while within the sphere of his gravitational pull, the very concept of distance was shredded apart. Hence, one might argue that engaging in close-quarters combat defied all reason. Nevertheless, his opponent...

"Haha!"

...Displayed no fear of the gravitational force. On the contrary, they utilized it to remain in proximity. Indeed, against Montserrat, this approach could be deemed a viable strategy. Existing within the ultra-close range, where contact with the enemy was possible, was akin to an eye within the storm. By hugging Montserrat tightly, the master of the vortex, the gravitational force would lose its effect.

Furthermore, since the long saw was less effective at close range, this tactic allowed them to strike two birds with one stone. Logically, it made sense, yet only a handful possessed the skill to execute it. Among all the **yazatas** that the black butler had dispatched in his life, one could count on a few fingers those who achieved this feat. Moreover, none of them possessed any other means of combating him apart from up-close engagements. In essence, they had no other choice—it was an act born out of desperation.

Even if Montserrat found their desperate foray into the realm between life and death impressive, he remained unsurprised. It could be presumed that had they possessed a means to attack him from a safe distance, they would have employed it. Nonetheless, he would not have allowed them to do so... Regardless, the circular saw held such terrifying power that one's reluctance to hurl themselves into the whirlwind of this human meat grinder was only natural.

Yet, with an air of calmness, Zurvan—no, rather, blissfully—closed in. Despite being armed with pistols, weapons designed for long-range combat, he chose to disregard the safer option. Muzzles aimed at his throat spewed flames one after another, but Montserrat gracefully evaded them. Even a direct hit would hardly pose much of a problem due to his immortality, yet it had become a familiar scenario to him. When faced with an opponent who exhibited unexpected behavior, he desired to respond in kind.

Murderers bore no code of honor, but Montserrat adhered to an impossible sense of formality. Just as he taught Frederica to conduct herself as a lady, he believed that he, too, should comport himself as a gentleman. Of course, in the end, it was merely bloodlust adorned with a different name. Yet, without a doubt, it carried his own unique ideology. It remained uncertain whether Zurvan took this into account, but as a result, he managed to gain an upper hand in the confrontation against a **daeva** of extraordinary rank.

"What's the matter? Try to kill me. What happened to your illustrious name?"

"Rest assured, I shall meet your expectations."

Exhaling through pursed lips, his breath transformed into a compressed air arrow. Zurvan effortlessly dodged the invisible projectile, one that could pierce through a mountain if struck directly. Following this evasion, he gripped a pistol like a knife, pressed it against Montserrat's forehead, and pulled the trigger. Yet, Montserrat, too, managed to dodge by pulling his head back. This created a small distance, allowing him to evade the whirring circular saw. Like a feather or a petal, he gracefully sidestepped the razor-sharp onslaught.

Such was Zurvan's way of combat. One could describe it as elegant. While Montserrat undeniably held an absolute advantage in terms of speed, Zurvan specialized in exploiting moments of vulnerability. His keen sense for various weak points and an uncanny sixth sense that allowed him to exploit them went unmatched. He was not one who diligently accumulated experience throughout his life—rather, he possessed an innate talent for instinctual perception. Such individuals did not exhibit consistent results, but it also meant that their strength varied depending on the opponent.

The more noble the adversary, the more effectively he showcased his true worth, unafraid to employ any trickery. However, even with all this in mind, the behavior exhibited against someone regarded as a paragon of murderers could not be deemed normal. It was, in fact, unprecedented. Furthermore, it was noteworthy that the threat to Zurvan extended beyond Montserrat.

As if determined to cleave them both in twain, Magsarion unleashed his colossal blade, relentlessly striking blow after mighty blow from behind his comrade. In other words, Zurvan found himself sandwiched between Montserrat and Magsarion. Entrapped between two fires, the shooter continued to evade their every assault, akin to a jester entertaining his audience. Even now, he effortlessly leaped over Magsarion's sweeping attack, as if possessing eyes on the back of his head.

From Montserrat's perspective, this assault had been concealed by Zurvan's presence, resulting in a delayed reaction. And it was precisely at this moment that the muzzle of a pistol pressed against the murderer's forehead. Simultaneously, a resounding gunshot reverberated. Alongside it, the furious blade surged forth, targeting its intended victim.

"...Indeed, it feels as though I am dancing with **daevas**."

Despite everything, Montserrat, donning an ironic smile, remained unscathed. Only one explanation sufficed—he had retreated with unseen swiftness, eluding the jaws of both adversaries. Yet, he, too, could not be deemed ordinary.

Even in the face of Zurvan and Magsarion's relentless onslaught, which could hardly be categorized as a coordinated effort, he retained an unshakable composure. At the very least,

he did not feel cornered, hence his characterization of the encounter as a "dance." One could hardly classify it as a true battle.

True, Montserrat failed to conclude matters as he desired, and his mood had indeed soured somewhat, yet their achievements remained limited to this extent. He even managed to converse calmly with them while skillfully evading their subsequent attacks.

"Perhaps you deliberately escalate the destruction, seeking to shatter my self-control?" Montserrat's voice cut through the chaos, laced with a mix of surprise and disdain.

"Such behavior is hardly befitting a **Yazata** like yourself," he continued, his tone dripping with sarcasm. "But fear not, your efforts will not go in vain. From now on, you shall receive even less of my attention."

The battle had already ensnared countless innocent citizens of Arzang, with Montserrat's attacks mercilessly carving through hundreds of helpless **ashavans**. And now, Zurvan and Magsarion joined the fray, their misplaced strikes adding to the carnage. It was a calculated move, using vulnerabilities as a means to control Montserrat's movements—a tactic intentionally employed. Such actions were far from the nature of a **Yazata**, and it hinted at a sinister contest for the murderers' prey.

"At first, I was mildly surprised," Montserrat continued, his voice laced with weariness. "But let me disappoint you—I am not so young as to be upset over lost prey. The naivety of youth has long departed from me. In fact, I should thank you for saving me time."

He made it clear that their efforts were futile. Montserrat assured them that their attempts to distract him would not succeed.

"I must admit, you belong to an incredibly amusing breed of individuals."

"However, in the end, white remains white. Perhaps your feeble attempt to mimic darkness, without the proper experience, brings you mental suffering? Allow me to offer a word of advice out of sincere sympathy: value your own individuality. While everyone goes through a rebellious phase, it is far better to approach life with serenity..."

"Enough with your empty words!" Zurvan's voice cut through, interrupting Montserrat's monologue.

In a flash of cannon fire that erupted before their eyes, Montserrat effortlessly evaded the explosion, a swift movement of his neck evading the deadly projectile. However, a stray bullet found its mark, hitting one of the maids under Montserrat's control. But it was inconsequential; the murderers living in the garden were immortal beings. The maid's fall was insignificant, or so it should have been... Yet, the maids did not rise. Their normally swift regeneration slowed unnaturally, and confusion painted their faces as they drowned in their own blood—like ordinary mortals.

"Take it easy," Montserrat taunted, his voice laced with grim satisfaction.

Magsarion's next onslaught was easily evaded by Montserrat, a display of effortless skill. But like the stray bullet before, this attack found its target—the other maid. The anomaly of Montserrat's keen senses immediately picked up on the unusual occurrence.

"Old habits die hard," Montserrat remarked, his voice dripping with condescension.

"You are indeed stubborn, you damn Gardener."

The maids lay motionless, their regeneration disturbingly slow. Montserrat's gaze shifted between the two **yazatas**, his silence speaking volumes. It was apparent that the danger had passed, and the maids would eventually heal. But had Montserrat ignored the attempted finishing blow, they would have perished without a doubt. Magsarion and Zurvan possessed a unique ability—the power to destroy even murderers. Through a process of elimination, Montserrat began to uncover the truth.

"The power of a Star Spirit? Unlikely," Montserrat mused, dismissing the possibility.

"I have not felt their call for aid. So, it must be my own strength... but that is even more improbable. The might possessed by the King of Evil or a **daeva** of extraordinary rank is beyond the reach of **ashavans** like me. It is as likely as fish flying through the sky. And even if there were exceptions, having two such beings at once is simply unrealistic."

There was only one logical conclusion. Montserrat nodded, releasing a weary sigh.

"A **Commandment**, I presume?" Montserrat inquired, a mix of curiosity and understanding in his voice.

"I am unaware of the price you pay, but it seems your desire to kill us burns brightly. Well, that is quite impressive, a remarkable skill indeed."

Montserrat had underestimated them when he initially received them as honored guests of his mistress. Acknowledging his oversight, he respectfully continued his speech.

"When I spoke of nature and its implications, perhaps there was a touch of self-irony in my words. As a gesture of apology, allow me to reveal my cards as well. I assume you are aware of my **Commandment**?"

"You are but a servant," Magsarion retorted coldly, his voice filled with disdain.

"Experienced **yazatas** are well aware of that."

"Indeed, you are absolutely correct."

The circular saw held by the butler slowed down gradually, eventually coming to a complete stop. The silence that followed resembled the calm before a devastating storm—a storm of absolute carnage that no force could halt.

"At present, I have undertaken two **Commandments**. While I cannot reveal one of them, I assume you are familiar with this one."

"I swear to recognize anyone who defeats me as my master and serve them with unwavering loyalty."

A distinct crack resonated from beneath Magsarion's helmet, possibly his own teeth unwittingly shattering. Montserrat's smile grew wider, an eerie display of satisfaction.

"This **Commandment** of Obedience, reminiscent of Quinn, has its own priorities to avoid disputes."

The one who proved stronger, who surpassed Montserrat with greater prowess, would hold the highest position. Currently, Frederica was indisposed, but it hadn't always been so. Two decades prior, someone had defeated this murderer, albeit only managing to seal him instead of finishing the job. Who could it have been? The answer presented itself naturally.

"The prospect of eternal slumber at the behest of Mr. Varhran did not appear as disheartening to me," Montserrat confessed.

"While I had indeed sworn to do his bidding, my lady proved to be far more captivating in my eyes—dazzling, one might say."

The circular saw began rotating in the opposite direction, contrary to its usual course. But this whirlwind, though seemingly righteous, exuded a malevolence that could not be denied. The servant, bound by an oath of loyalty to the king of evil, proudly announced to Magsarion as he leaped toward him.

"To cherish all murderers... That is the will of my master, and thus, it is my duty to protect them."

The force behind the guillotine-like saw surpassed anything it had demonstrated thus far. Even Frederica's recent blow paled in comparison. A relentless tornado surged forward, tearing the very earth asunder. Anything caught in its path was consumed, shredded, and flung aside.

"Goo-o-o!"

Neither Magsarion nor Zurvan could evade this onslaught. In fact, it was a miracle that they managed to save their limbs from the meat grinder of Montserrat's overwhelming power. Their abilities, whether fueled by their **Commandments** or other factors, could only delay the inevitable. Deflecting the whirlwind was out of the question, and those already trapped within it would never escape. They spun amidst a thousand blades, left to await their obliteration. It was their punishment for daring to harm the maids in Montserrat's presence. Dissenters, they could be called.

"Are you unharmed? In that case, let us proceed to milady."

"Yes, Mr. Montserrat."

"It appears that milady was responsible for dispatching most of them."

"But that is to be expected."

Love for their own kind and boundless dedication to protect them—those were the results of the fourth King of Evil's command to his servant. Although Montserrat could not surpass the methods employed by the **Drujvants** to prevent him from acting until the last possible moment, there was no doubt that he symbolized their unique bond. Almost the entire population of Arzang had been slain. Only a few **yazatas** remained to be dealt with, and then the feast would come to a close. And the customary way to conclude such an event was in full display within the garden.

"It was quite the spectacle. With all due respect, allow me to proceed to the memorial service."

With those words, the murderers departed the battlefield, their steps light and carefree.



Frederica, the mistress of the crystal palace, gazes at the unfolding spectacle with a mix of surprise and concern. The interruption feels like a sudden rain shower on a sunny terrace, disrupting the serene atmosphere of a leisurely tea party. Her elegant brows furrow, lending an air of seriousness to her normally composed countenance.

"What troubles you, Montserrat? You seem quite rough."

She immediately recognizes the approaching tornado as the handiwork of her butler, Montserrat. With a soft sigh, she delicately holds her curls and puffs out her cheeks, not flinching or attempting to divert the oncoming storm. Instead, she fixes Montserrat with an unwavering glare, causing the colossal saw to vanish as if offering an apology to its mistress.

The shockwave that had scattered everything around them leaves Frederica untouched, signaling an unexpected end to several battles in one fell swoop. As the smoke clears, the ruins of the crystal palace reveal a scene of devastation. Half-dead **yazatas**, including Quinn, Ferdows, Samluch, Magsarion, and Zurvan, litter the grounds. It is a wonder that any of them survived in such a state. Only Alma, the kneeling figure, seems relatively unscathed, though her wounds are far from light. Montserrat's tornado had deliberately spared her, perhaps as a token of apology for incurring Frederica's disfavor.

It is akin to a first-class chef presenting his masterpiece to a discerning client. Alma, realizing her position, bites her lower lip. Seeing Magsarion and Zurvan lying near her, her expression becomes even more somber, a tinge of sadness clouding her features. She can't bear to witness the devil in the armor attempting to rise again, even in his battered state.

She knows that Magsarion will never yield, even if it means fighting to the point of being dismembered. The thought is too unbearable for her to bear. And so, with memories etched deeply within her soul and a bittersweet smile on her lips, Alma musters her determination and speaks to her childhood friend.

"Do not worry. You will not lose. I will not allow it. Please, rest and do not rise anymore. I cannot bear to see you shed any more blood. You have fought enough, Magsarion."

Her every word is uttered from the depths of her heart, filled with unwavering resolve. Yet, Magsarion remains deaf to her plea, his scarlet figure stained from head to toe with blood, struggling to raise himself like a broken machine. It is Zurvan, lying nearby, who responds to her words.

"Then, I suggest you hasten your actions. I have done my best to taunt him, but in battles like these, I am no match for you," Zurvan remarks casually, as if engaged in a casual conversation.

Alma's tone immediately turns colder, her frustration evident, but Zurvan pays little heed. Despite being on the brink of death like the rest, he possesses only enough strength to light a cigarette, take a drag, and continue their seemingly carefree exchange.

"If it weren't for me, you would have undoubtedly faced greater difficulties. I found Quinn once again."

"But, just so you know, I have no intention of taking responsibility for you. In fact, I would prefer it if you perished quickly. There is no need to involve so many innocent lives in this..." Alma's demeanor grows even colder, her patience waning. She responded with determination, her voice laced with an icy resolve.

"There is no need for your biased judgment. Magsarion bears responsibility for this as well." Zurvan, however, continues to casually disregard her words, a carefree expression adorning his face.

He is aware of his impending demise and has little strength left to spare. Smoking his cigarette, he carries on with their conversation as if the impending doom is inconsequential. Amidst this tense exchange, the girl who made the greatest sacrifice and contributed the most to the cause of good loses consciousness. She lies on the ground, her face upturned, and it is evident that her time is running out. Urgent action is required, and there is no room for confusion, fear, or hesitation. The stakes are too high, and any remnants of doubt or guilt within her must be cast aside.

Quinn's persistent struggle has instilled her with unwavering courage. Alma realizes that if a less experienced warrior can face the King of Evil without backing down, then she, too, cannot afford to falter.

"I believe in your alluring skills," Zurvan interjects, once again ignoring the gravity of the situation.

Alma, her ears attuned to extraneous chatter, silently shuts out the distractions. With closed eyes, she lifts her face to the heavens, assuming a pose reminiscent of offering a prayer. Her unwavering spirit remains honed to perfection, unyielding even in the presence of the surrounding murderers.

"How dare you disrupt my enjoyment, Montserrat?" Frederica's voice resonates with a mix of irritation and disappointment.

"I must say, I am somewhat displeased with you."

"I offer my sincerest apologies for not foreseeing this, milady. It seems I may have gotten carried away."

Though Montserrat senses something amiss, it is too late. Alma opens her eyes, her gaze fixed on the sky, as if addressing an unseen entity.

"You see everything. Help us, Kaikhosru." Her plea is twisted, even for a **Yazata**, but it embodies Alma's unwavering determination.

It is no longer a request; it is a declaration of war and an order. She dares to command Kaikhosru himself, stating that if he wants to claim her, he must assist her friends as well. It is a brazen act of love and defiance. In response, the serpent king, perched atop a mountain of treasures that envelop everything around, bursts into laughter.

The internal struggle displayed by Alma—her faith, determination, and pride—alongside the quiet love that flows between them, ignite an unprecedented greed within Kaikhosru. This is not a mere request; it is a challenge. It becomes a game to determine who will bend the will of the other.

Will Kaikhosru succumb to Alma's love, or will Alma be the first to succumb to his power? It may seem trivial, but in matters of love, there is nothing more consequential. Almost like a duel, a battle unfolds. The victor claims the soul of their opponent, and the stakes are nothing short of life itself. Though Kaikhosru's power appears to have the upper hand, Alma triumphs on a mental level.

He cannot dismiss her order to help more swiftly with a dismissive retort like "I know nothing, perish." It indicates that Kaikhosru is more likely to be the one to surrender. Suppressing a laughter filled with complex emotions, he acquiesces to her demand.

"I desire you. I have fallen in love with you all over again, Alma."

In essence, it is a competition—a test of wills. They had not discussed this beforehand, yet both Alma and Kaikhosru intuitively understood the nature of the game.

Who will break the other's resolve?

Who will withstand the pressure of this love, the man or the woman?

In love, even the smallest conflicts can hold tremendous significance. It can be described as a duel—a game of love. Alma and Kaikhosru, independent of each other, comprehend the essence of the challenge.

It may appear as a minor squabble, but within the realm of love, nothing is of greater consequence. As if in a draw, the battle reaches a turning point.

"Rabble that dared to hurt my beloved concubine. Know the divine will of the dragon."

The maid named Shirin is the first to perceive it, that lurking presence behind the veil of thunderclouds that blankets the sky. Her initial impression mistakes it for a celestial body, a satellite of the planet. In the realms where humanity resides, the moons often evoke comparisons to the eyes of beautiful ladies. Four circular shapes, arranged in an inverted trapezoid, bear a resemblance to eyes. But Shirin swiftly realizes that this is no moon; it is something else entirely.

Scales become discernible. Mustaches become visible. Horns, fangs, and a majestic mane reveal themselves. Something of such colossal magnitude that its face alone encompasses the entire expanse of the sky gazes down upon them from celestial heights. This is not the moon; it is the eyes themselves. Four eyes, ablaze with iridescent fire, mirror the resplendent visage—daunting and magnificent, terrifying yet breathtaking. And there is but one word to describe such a creature.

That word is "God" — an entity dwelling beyond mortal reach, beyond the confines of good and evil. Even Shirin, who believed she had long abandoned all forms of confusion as an

assassin, feels an absolute power that renders her motionless. The Hegemony of the Dragon delivers a judgement that will teach them the true meaning of fear.

"Prostrate yourselves, become naught but eternal silence. Only then shall I forgive your insolence and love you until the end of time."

From its gaping maw, a cascade of golden light pours forth, enveloping the swarm of murderers writhing below. Dragon's breath. The might of the Star Spirit brooks no dissent. All living beings that tread upon the soil of this planet and inhale its air do so by the grace of Kaikhosru. No one, regardless of the form in which they wield his favor, can contest the royal decree. And so, it is a given that even the immortals are not exempt.

Starting with Shirin, the maids swiftly transform into gems, their bodies crystallizing within seconds. It is a formidable method to immobilize the murderers, and backed by the power of the King of Evil himself, resistance becomes futile. This victory is absolute, and even if the "effect" may manifest more slowly for some, the outcome remains unchanged.

"Kh!..."

The dragon's judgement continues unabated, and Montserrat, bathed in its wrath, finds his limbs gradually turning into black diamonds. The conversion spreads relentlessly, and he is powerless to halt the process. Even the strength he once wielded to protect his charges proves insufficient against the decree of Kaikhosru.

"Take the others and retreat, Montserrat. Perhaps, by leaving this place, they might regain their former semblance."

Frederica's voice carries to him, her head turned in his direction even as her own countenance transforms into a ruby hue. With a smile befitting a regal assassin, brimming with bloodlust, she adds, "I shall handle the rest. I would not want you to vanish entirely."

"It shall be done... Please accept my deepest apologies, milady."

Montserrat nods and begins his retreat, relying on the power bestowed by his master's command. Though he may remain ensnared by the serpent's influence, he can still gather the maids and make their escape. Watching him depart, Frederica clears her throat gently, her posture straightening. Her dress and skin crack and crumble, cascading in a shimmering display of ruby light, but she pays it no mind. If anything, she appears elated.

"We should have expected nothing less from you, Brother Kaikhosru. I am truly awestruck."

Amidst the dragon's breath, Frederica gazes skyward, her voice laden with genuine admiration. Even she cannot halt the transformation into a gem, and in a few tens of seconds, she too will succumb to complete immobilization. However, it would be naive to

think that she is now bereft of options. In a clash between the King of Evil, ten seconds is ample time for the tide to shift a thousandfold.

"Allow me to repay you with due humility. Though I remain your ignorant little sister, I shall give my all."

The hand of the fourth King of Evil vanishes into thin air. Like her butler, Frederica possesses a weapon hidden in her own secret garden, one she can summon as her emblem. Even if she cannot break Kaikhosru's spell, she can strike first. Ultimately, this battle rests upon the emotions unleashed, a test of which is mightier—greed or bloodlust.

Amidst a frenzied scream that distorts space itself, the scythe of the grim reaper materializes within her grasp. This weapon alone allows Frederica, whose sinister appearance once struck fear into Quinn and the rest of the **Yazatas**, to unleash her true power. The opponent's size and the chasm between them hold no significance now. A single swing, imbued with the entirety of the Princess of Murder's strength, can rend even the stars asunder.

"Please, don't think I'm vulgar."

Frederica's voice resonates with an eerie sweetness, her words dripping with a chilling delight.

"To tell the truth, I constantly think about how I want to kill each of you."

Her smile widens, revealing a mix of innocence and malice as she rises to her feet, clutching the scythe of sorrow tightly in her hands. A weapon that embodies her deepest desires, the embodiment of her dream about to be realized. She revels in the intoxicating thrill that courses through her veins, an indescribable pleasure that sets her soul ablaze.

"I wonder," she muses, her voice filled with anticipation. "What cries will escape Brother Kaikhosru? How I long to witness the colors of Sister Mashyana's innards, to feel the heat of Brother Bahlavan's blood. The mere thought of opening Brother Farn's skull and peering into his brain makes me restless. And dear Sister Nadare... Oh, how I yearn to slice her into pieces and savor her slowly, leaving not a trace behind!"

In this moment, their focus narrows solely to each other. They see no one else but themselves, and the outcome of this clash rests solely on their strengths. The fate of the world hangs in the balance, and even if an almighty god exists, it surely must have arrived at the same conclusion.

Thus, "he" erases all expectations, leaving nothing but dust in his wake—a heartless figure traversing a scorched wasteland, devoid of mercy or remorse.

"Alastor..."

Breaking through the blinding veil of light, the black knight charges forth, his blade piercing through the fourth king of evil. The collision is swift and brutal, a burst of superhuman speed that tears Frederica apart, her ruby blood splattering like shards of diamond dust.

"You..." she utters, her severed head floating through the air, a dazed expression on her face.

In this moment, the girl who once thirsted for blood forgets even her insatiable desires, her bewilderment genuine and unfeigned. Such an intervention defies all sense of propriety, violating the unwritten rules of the Kings of Evil. Merit and demerit become inconsequential, realism and unreality blur together. Even the very fabric of destiny seems neglected in the face of such audacity. It is an act that defies explanation, the pinnacle of madness, and its impact is devastating.

"How beautiful you are..." Frederica's eyes shimmer with tears of delight.

With the swift regeneration befitting a true lady, her form and attire restore themselves, and she turns to the blood-soaked knight with her most radiant smile.

"Please, do tell me your name. Mine is Frederi... gah?!"

Yet, her romantic and girlish dreams are shattered by a deluge of blood-stained metal. The intruder, oblivious to the courtesy of introductions, slices through Frederica's face, leaving her unable to even utter her name. And he, too, has no intentions of revealing his own identity.

"Shut up and die, scum. Who gave you the right to breathe?"

The sidekick's words cut through the air like a serrated blade as he continues to rend Frederica into smaller and smaller fragments. A storm of curses, hatred, and boundless rage engulfs the scene—a relentless onslaught that surpasses the limits of regeneration.

For every million times the enemy revives, he will kill them ten million times over. Magsarion, transformed into a black tempest, annihilates the Princess of Murder with sheer madness.

"Trash... You are nothing but trash. Don't you dare think that everything will end well for you."

Nearly half of the blood petals scattered in the air belong to him. Even in the face of mortal wounds, he plunges further into recklessness, bestowing upon himself additional gifts from the Star Spirit. Soaring, teleporting, soaring again—the knight pushes his speed beyond the limits of the enemy's regeneration, his blade becoming a blur of motion.

Consequently, Magsarion becomes fragile and ethereal, as delicate as a wisp of smoke, ready to be extinguished by the gentlest breeze. Even with the protection of the Devil

A armor, each swing shatters his muscles, fractures his bones, and grinds his organs. Yet, he does not waver. In his lexicon, there exists no concept of surrender.

"Feel the true depths of despair and pain. Cry out as you realize your own worthlessness..."

The howl of heartlessness reverberates throughout the universe.

"And die!!"

Undoubtedly, he has embraced madness. Like a dark sun yearning to consume the cosmos, his radiance blinds all who bear witness. Frederica, unable to tear her gaze away, trembles in awe. What a refined and captivating gentleman... Is it this very essence that awakens her admiration?

For the first time, she is astonished, moved by something greater than herself. The fourth King of Evil sheds her empty facade, reborn as a true lady. No longer hollow, no longer devoid of purpose. For she now knows ardor. In her desire to dance with her chosen one until the end of time, she witnesses an immortal miracle—a paradise in its purest form.

"I want you... I implore you, show me the way!"

Instantaneously restored, Frederica raises her scythe of grief. Her royal power blazes forth, an unprecedented force that radiates with an unstoppable and saccharine fire, an embodiment of her innermost desires. The moment of truth has arrived. Even if the world crumbles, it will not fade away. Such is the fervor of her soul.



I slowly regain consciousness, my body throbbing with pain from head to toe. As my vision clears, I find Alma gazing at me with unwavering seriousness.

"Don't move," she warns, her voice devoid of any trace of levity.

"Haoma has never been kind to you, nor has it been for me. One wrong move, and you'll truly be dead."

I manage to utter a weak protest, my voice faltering.

"Kh... U..."

The gravity of her words dawns on me, even in my semi-conscious state. Does this mean we can retreat? If we're still alive, does that mean the battle has come to an end? It's difficult to believe, but I can't conceive of any other explanation. A sense of relief washes over me, though I fight to remain conscious and respond.

"So... we won..." I murmur, gratitude and exhaustion intermingling in my voice. "Thank you, Alma. It's all... thanks to you..."

My response surprises her with its unexpected reticence. She remains silent, and the absence of her words sends a tremor of unease through me. Realizing that something is amiss, I strain to assess the situation. With great effort, I raise my head and survey the desolate landscape.

"Magsarion..."

He stands alone in the midst of the wasteland, his back turned to us. Not a muscle twitches, but I sense the rage simmering within him, threatening to consume him entirely. Magsarion has always personified hatred, but I have never witnessed him seethe with such intensity. To be more precise, his anger carries a different shade now—a tinge of shame. It's as if he feels defeated, though we are still alive... What transpired here?

"Have you not realized yet, Quinn?"

Zurvan, seated at Alma's side, addresses my confusion. He gazes at the sky, a cigarette dangling from his lips, and speaks with a disenchanted air.

"Kaikhosru is gone. This place has been stripped of its master. But he hasn't perished, and of course, the Princess of Murder still lives."

"By the gata," Alma interjects, her words promptly clarifying the situation.

"A gathering of the Kings of Evil, you mean?"

I've heard rumors of their occasional meetings—the seven absolute evils brought together, unable to resist her summons. So this was the reason for their sudden convergence. It feels too fortuitous to be mere chance; there must be someone's will at work here. Yet, I'm uncertain of the implications and what awaits us.

"In truth, they vanished in a rather fascinating location," Zurvan chuckles to himself, discussing the merits and demerits as if detached from the consequences.

However, this abrupt convergence has momentarily diverted the course of the battle, leading us to our current situation. It seems that Magsarion's shame stems from allowing his quarry to slip away for the first time. He didn't lose, but he didn't win either. It's difficult to discern who exactly was saved from imminent death.

"Regardless, our priority now is to tend to our injuries," Alma declares.

"As I mentioned, returning to the Sacred Realm would be our best course of action... Hey, where are you going, Zurvan? You'll carry Samluch and Ferdows."

"Oh, really? What a hassle..." Zurvan grumbles, his voice dripping with reluctance.

"Stop complaining. Who among us has the most feathers?"

As I listen to their banter, as if it originates from a distant place, my gaze returns to Magsarion. He remains motionless, yet I can sense the imminent eruption of his pent-up fury.

This is undoubtedly what he desires. Dissatisfied with his current standing, his anger continues to swell, growing into an overwhelming force that threatens to consume everything in its path. The darkness of his back silently conveys his intentions:

"I despise this outcome. I won't forgive it. I will kill anyone who stands in my way..."

And yet...

"I'm sorry," I whisper softly, my voice carrying genuine happiness.

"I'm still genuinely happy. That everyone is safe, and that you're alive..."

No matter how you may disdain it, this feeling remains untarnished. To me, it is a cherished miracle. Despite its imperfections, the fact that everyone here is alive brings me immeasurable joy.

6

The air is thick with tension as the dimension itself seems to hold its breath, anticipating the outcome of this peculiar encounter. The isolation of this realm from the outside world is palpable, as if the very act of contact could pose a threat to life itself. Yet, this is no crude barricade or makeshift shelter; it is a meticulously crafted space, akin to the grandeur of a throne room, accessible only to a chosen few. Attempting to describe the interior proves challenging, for it defies easy categorization. Angular and rounded elements coalesce, blurring the line between metal and stone, leaving observers to speculate on the nature of its composition. It defies comparison, an enigma that eludes comprehension even for those born in this era. In simple terms, it exists on a different plane, traversing not just cultures but entire civilizations. It embodies technologies that have reached unimaginable heights, constructed with the precision of real numbers.

Here, miracles and witchcraft, irrational concepts, find no place to take root. This is a singularity birthed in a different era, under a different Throne, yet it continues to permeate the universe. A vessel that plies the vastness of space, the fortress of the second King of Evil, known as Angra Mainyu.

"Well... and why are you so furious with us, Frederica?" a voice breaks the silence, emanating from a table encircled by chairs, all fashioned from the same enigmatic material with mysterious designs.

Two girls occupy the seats, leaving five vacant. The atmosphere is devoid of anyone else but them. One of the girls, fair-haired and downtrodden, gazes forlornly at the floor, her cheeks puffed in frustration. The other...

"If you remain silent, I won't understand a thing. I can't read minds, so if you have something to say, speak up," the woman who seems to lead the gathering prods, her tone filled with amusement.

"You acted dishonestly, sister Nadare," Frederica finally musters the courage to speak, her words carrying a tinge of accusation.

The woman at the helm arches an eyebrow in surprise, then bursts into hearty laughter. "Well, did I say something amusing? Oh, I'm quite angry too!"

Her laughter echoes through the chamber as she sticks out her right hand towards an indignant Frederica. In her palm, darkness swirls like an absolute abyss, devoid of even the faintest glimmer.

"I believe you've misunderstood something. Do you truly think I forced you to be here?"

"Isn't that the case?" Frederica retorts.

"Of course not. I thought I had already explained everything..."



This palm, in contrast, exudes a pure whiteness resembling a gaping void. Nadare, the second king of evil, embodies contradictions and defies every categorization. She appears to be in her twenties or thirties, her stature neither tall nor short, with no horns or tail. However, the amalgamation of opposing elements she possesses would overwhelm any ordinary person.

Each strand of her flowing hair alternates between white and black, while her smiling eyes, warm and kind, differ from each other, one with a pupil and sclera painted in contrasting hues. Even her attire adheres to a monochrome aesthetic. Radiant emptiness and black darkness interweave like a wreath of flowers, challenging the world's dualistic order or perhaps epitomizing it. And yet, despite the disconcerting nature of her appearance, there is a haunting beauty to her. Frederica, in comparison, resembles a harmless kitten in the presence of Nadare's poisonous allure.



"Alright then, perhaps nothing can be done about it? After all, the last time we saw each other, you were but a mere baby. Fine, I shall explain it once more."

"Firstly, nobody knows when the gata will occur, and none can reject its summons. Secondly, during the gata, engaging in fights is a futile endeavor. No matter what we do, no one dies, rendering it pointless. Thirdly, it always takes place here, and can you imagine? It was decided even before my birth. Fourthly, as a result, any assumptions you hold, accusing me, lack foundation... And fifthly, if everyone comprehended everything, why wouldn't we enjoy a cup of tea together?"

"Thank you very much."

As a killer, she is bound by certain rules and cannot partake in herbal decoctions. But perhaps her anger stems not from this, but rather from the fact that Nadare's explanation leaves her with no one else to blame for her current predicament, hence her inclination to stubbornly remain indignant.

"There are countless things we don't understand and cannot grasp. The beauty of life lies in acknowledging this and finding joy within it, Frederica." Her smile, despite bearing the title of absolute evil for millennia, emanates genuine warmth.

"To be honest, I was somewhat apprehensive about explaining such profound matters to you... But it seems my baseless concerns have been laid to rest, and that brings me great joy. You're doing just fine now."

"What are you talking about?"

"You're likely still angry and hurt. I don't know what has happened to you, but you're so endearing in this moment."

With the affectionate air of an older sister teasing her younger sibling, Nadare pokes Frederica's cheek with her finger.

"Are you in love?" she asks, an unexpected inquiry that leaves Frederica gaping in astonishment.

Meanwhile, a new arrival interrupts their exchange. The air quivers with anticipation as a presence, emanating an aura of ferocity, steps into the scene. Clad in armor-like muscles, standing over two meters tall, this embodiment of power exudes an unimaginable strength. Crimson flames flicker in his eyes and mane, as he clenches his fists with a force capable of shattering stars. The third King of Evil, driven by an obsession with becoming the strongest, releases a battle cry.



"So all I need to do is defeat this nonsense," he declares. His steel fist shatters Nadare once again, a cataclysmic explosion of even greater fury and devastation.

The might behind his initial strike is undeniable, yet it fails to quell the enigmatic woman's spirit. Bahlavan, a being unrestrained by limits, perpetually transcending his past self, vowed to overcome anything that proved insurmountable. From the moment of his birth, he honed himself into a war machine, ceaselessly amassing power. Though he may be unable to break the rules of the gata at present, he remains convinced that someday he will succeed.

Nadare recognizes this unwavering determination, and thus her laughter bears no hint of malevolence. She lavishes him with praise for his straightforward nature, encouraging him with words of support. The cycle of destruction and rebirth repeats itself, with each encounter leading to the annihilation of Nadare, only for her to be restored moments later. Yet...

"What nonsense. I'd rather depart soon. I have no business with you," the voice of reason interjects, emerging from a figure that defies any semblance of normalcy.

Appearing somewhat like a doll, her eccentric traditional garments adorned with vibrant patterns, this enigmatic woman possesses a silhouette devoid of irregularities. Her posture exudes a slender elegance, her body from neck to torso reminiscent of a column. In its truest sense, she resembles a primitive doll, sporting a cylindrical torso and a spherical head. There seems to be no other way to describe her with absolute candor.

Alternatively, one might liken her to a plant. Devoid of any signs of life, her motionless figure and immobile features raise suspicions that this is not a mere mask. A funerary mask, perhaps. Yet, despite her seeming lifelessness, Mashyana, the fifth King of Evil, suddenly twitches an eyebrow—a first display of a reaction.



She bends down, ever so lightly, toward Frederica's unmoving back, sniffing the air delicately. In this dimension of unfathomable peculiarity, where every encounter defies common sense, the arrival of these extraordinary beings heralds a confrontation that surpasses rational comprehension. And as the tale unfolds amidst the clash of these supernatural forces, the very fabric of existence trembles, gripped by an inexplicable tension.

"So... Who did you meet?"

Frederica finally replied, her voice a mere whisper, as she deliberately ignored the question. Tremors coursed through her shoulders, but she mustered the strength to speak, albeit in an undertone.

"Sister Mashyan..."

Her gaze lifted at that precise moment, a smile poised to bloom upon her face, capable of captivating anyone in its ethereal beauty.

"Listen... Imagine, I fell in love!"

In a graceful motion, she reached out for the scythe that materialized nearby, twirling around it like a spinning top. As she spun, Mashyana, her sister, was cleaved into fragments like a fallen log, while Frederica leaped towards Bahlavan, who relentlessly pummeled Nadare. Then, in an instant, Frederica exploded into nothingness. Her form shattered under the relentless force of her "big brother's" left fist. But that wasn't the end.

She reappeared promptly, swinging her scythe once more. Yet, her weapon met steel muscles, her head soared away from her shoulders, only to be reborn yet again. However, branches emerged abruptly, preventing her from resurrecting.

"Answer. Who did you meet?" Mashyana's composure shattered, her cold demeanor giving way to unmasked emotions.

Behind her steely visage, a whirlwind of horror, strength, and a hint of embarrassment emanated. Anger, impatience, perhaps even joy.

"I won't let you go until you answer. This was my..."

Mashyana's demand, laced with profound sadness, was abruptly interrupted by the unyielding steel fist of Bahlavan. In an instant, Mashyan's upper half vanished, accompanied by a spine-chilling creak. With an unexpected surge of fervor, the fifth king of evil unleashed a furious cry.

"Don't you dare interfere, cricket!"

"I am stronger," Bahlavan retorted.

"Listen to me, both of you!"

The conversation swirled in chaos, making comprehension nearly impossible. Yet, Nadare, finally freed from her constraints and restored to her form, squinted her two-colored eyes, observing the tumultuous spectacle of the warring kings of evil from the sidelines, as if savoring the beauty of this world. She remained unaffected, not engaging in the chaotic skirmish among the motley group of Kings of Evil.

"Would you like to join them, Kaikhosru?" she asked with a hint of curiosity.

"Don't look at me. Still infecting me with your stupidity," replied the nearby Sixth King of Evil, his tone a visible grimace.

He brazenly propped up both feet on the table, sighing as he continued.

"In a quarrel where no one can even kill anyone, there's no benefit for me. Hard work isn't my style."

His nonchalant remark befitted his character, and his recognition of this futile conflict as a waste of time showcased his astute judgment. Amongst the abnormal Kings of Evil, he appeared remarkably level-headed, demanding attention and respect. Amidst the chaos, Bahlavan's attacks were no longer solely directed at Kaikhosru. In the room, the third King of Evil remained unnoticed, attacking anyone who caught his attention, yet maintaining an air of detachment. Even if Kaikhosru were to look his way, he would receive no acknowledgment.

The third king treated him merely as part of the scenery—an impressive display of self-control. Not even Bahlavan's cruelty and overwhelming presence could perturb him, and the other King of Evil failed to replicate such indifference.

"Alright, it's clear. So, you're still obsessed with your idea of evil? I understand that it must be challenging for you, but I hope everything goes well," Nadare interjected.

"Sounds like you already know what I'm up to," Kaikhosru replied.

"Well, I've been around for quite some time. It's simply the best option for you."

Nadare rested her chin on her hands and smiled, tilting her head to one side. Even with her vast experience in the art of seduction, she remained defenseless against such modesty. It was a fear not born out of threat but rather akin to conversing with a deranged mother.

"Do your best. I love each and every one of you. I want you all to be happy, and I hope all your wishes come true."

"Nonsense," Kaikhosru retorted. "Only I can amass all desires in my treasury. After all, it's a battle."

"Indeed. That's why I want you to somehow succeed. Among us, you are the most greedy and the most ruthless."

Nadare whispered into Kaikhosru's ear, her black right hand gently caressing his chin. Her words conveyed a sense of stroking his head, yet they held no hint of mockery. Such was Nadare—a being detached from this world. She could utter words akin to those to anyone, emphasizing her unmatched ability to recognize and appreciate the unattainable talents possessed by others. How wondrous this trait of hers was, surpassing anyone else. Nadare openly acknowledged her inferiority in their unattainable talents, yet her interlocutors couldn't help but recognize her as an entity alien to this world. Despite Kaikhosru's vexation, he found himself in agreement with every word she spoke. After all, as Nadare keenly observed, he was a dragon sworn to claim the throne of the entire universe.

"What about Farn? Will he be alright?" Kaikhosru inquired.

"Well, yes. Although it seems he isn't too keen on showing us. That child has caused quite a bit of trouble."

It was doubtful that anyone else in the world would dare refer to the Workshop of Annihilation as a "child." Nadare sighed, her words casting doubt upon what one would hear next.

"He used to be such a sweet boy..."

An ominous undertone colored her words, causing Kaikhosru to turn away with annoyance. The seventh King of Evil remained absent from the scene, but Kaikhosru saw no reason to delve into the matter of Aka Manah just yet. Not because he held the seventh king in contempt—on the contrary, he regarded it as something of utmost importance. It wasn't a topic to be broached lightly; caution had to be exercised. The hour had not yet come.

Kaikhosru needed assurance that this absurd world had begun its descent into decay. As Kaikhosru immersed himself in contemplation of his future greatness, Nadare continued to muse aloud by his side.

"Farn is so complicated that he has forgotten precisely what he desires. If he were to remember, he would become a true miracle, a radiant circle of light. And he is certainly capable of that. So..."

Nadare closed her eyes and offered a prayer, laced with a sense of dignity that sent shivers down one's spine.

"Please, may all that I love be blessed. So that I can become the universal Nadare..." Her phrase, tinged with an unsettling grandeur, hinted at the apogee of goodness—a "universal hero."

In contrast, the apogee of evil resided in the "universal King of Evil."

Meanwhile, a man wandered the corridors of Angra Mainyu, his steps slow and desolate. His countenance bore a lack of determination and vitality, yet it shimmered with such brilliance that it dazzled the eyes. Time seemed to halt in his presence, and with each step he took, space tore asunder, yielding before him. His radiance was flawless, akin to a sculpture of a celestial deity, captivating all who beheld him.



His cascading waves of blond hair, untamed and yet exuding a captivating charm, flowed down his broad shoulders. His scarlet eyes, reminiscent of a cosmic kaleidoscope, seemed to encapsulate the vast universe itself.

Draped in a cassock that bore the weight of countless galaxies, he embodied a splendor that outshone even the radiance of the celestial bodies it contained. This enigmatic figure was none other than Khvarenah, the first King of Evil—the true visage of the Workshop of Annihilation, equivalent to the soul of the Annihilation Star Cluster.

Only revealed during the gata, this form remained unknown not only to ordinary beings but even to his own daughter, Quinn. Yet, his reasons for concealing his true self were not rooted in cold calculation or a desire to protect his vulnerabilities. It may appear that Farn could be defeated in his current state. Since his body and spirit were not in sync, determining the easier approach was often challenging. However, it seemed more preferable than confronting an incomprehensibly colossal giant. The prospect of victory began to emerge, offering a glimmer of hope.

Yet, a stellar entity of such immense magnitude could not be vanquished by simply destroying a single core. Even if his soul were to perish, the insatiable appetites of the Annihilation Star Cluster would persist.

Such an outcome would birth a cruel monster devoid of any semblance of reason, triggering a rapid descent into oblivion for the entire universe. Despair would reign supreme. Hence, it could hardly be termed self-preservation in the conventional sense.

In fact, Farn himself remained oblivious to the form he had assumed. Lost in a state of profound confusion, he wandered aimlessly, devoid of the logic and common sense he once displayed as a star. Some might even describe him as appearing imbecilic.

"Why...why am I here?" he uttered, his voice laced with a plea for assistance.

Clutching at his own cassock, he tore it asunder with a resounding crack, then mechanically tilted his head, gazing at the torn fabric.

"No. Not like this. It's not...what I wanted. What they wanted...from me...what?"

"I don't know," the Annihilation Workshop's very existence was shaped by this single thought.